IKE PARTINGTON

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"*Lively Boys! Lively Boys!*"

IKE PARTINGTON;

OR,

THE ADVENTURES OF A HUMAN BOY AND HIS FRIENDS.

BY

B. P. SHILLABER,

AUTHOR OF "PARTINGTONIAN PATCHWORK," "LINES IN PLEASANT PLACES," ETC.

"Oh! when I was a tiny boy,
My days and nights were full of joy,
My mates were blithe and kind:
No wonder that I sometimes sigh,
And dash the tear-drop from my eye,
To cast a look behind." — Hood.

BOSTON

LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO.

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Norwood Press:
Berwick & Smith Co., Norwood, Mass., U.S.A.

PREFACE.

"Dining once with a friend, whose family consisted of only himself and three boys, conversation with my host was interrupted by a violent outbreak among the latter; and, as we turned, a plate of squash was hurled by one at his opposite neighbor, which took a perfect cast of his countenance. My host, turning to me, simply said, 'Lively boys, lively boys, doctor!' and resumed the remark he had been making." — DR. TREAT'S *Diary and Table-Talk.*

IN judging the boy, liveliness should not be mistaken for wickedness, if anybody can stop long enough to discriminate; but a plate of flying squash, for the moment, might well awake a doubt, except in the mind of the one who understood the parties. The stories herein told must be judged in this way. They illustrate the general conduct of the "Human Boy," as Mr. Chadband calls him; and the term "Lively Boys" will better distinguish conduct that may be mischievous without being malicious. Ike, as the representative Boy, has long demonstrated this idea. The Boy must not be judged by the standard of Childhood or Manhood. He has a sphere of his own; and all of his mischief,

frolic, and general deucedness belongs to his own condition. The Boy has but little plan, purpose, or intention, in what he does, beyond having a good time. Boys that think, and have no interest in the doings of boyhood, may be delightful aids to a quiet home; but the life, spirit, energy, and health of the active Boy, come with his activity. As for boyish fun, it is not so much that as it is experiment; and the boyish reader of these pages will see how it is for himself. He will see his own motives, impulses, and conduct, in the incidents narrated; and those of older growth, who once were boys, will read in them their own early experiences. Boys will be boys.

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IKE PARTINGTON.

CHAPTER I.

MOVING INCIDENTS. — SETTLED AT "THE CORNER." — THE CREEK AND SURROUNDINGS. — SEASONABLE PROSPECTS. — READY FOR ACTION.

IT was with a feeling of real pleasure that Mrs. Partington grasped Dr. Spooner's hand, and bade him welcome; although she confessed that she was "a little decomposed" at being caught just as she was, as she was not dressed for company, and asked him to excuse her.

"Make no apology to an old friend, I beg," said he.

"Thank you, doctor: please sit down," placing a chair for him.

He did so, but immediately rose again as he found that he had seated himself, by the dim light, upon something warm; and a shallow pan of

molasses-candy, which Ike had placed there a few minutes before while he went out to set a slip-noose in the fence for a cat, came up with him. Mrs. Partington was much mortified; but the doctor re-assured her as he sat down safely in another chair, though a little sticky.

"I wished to see you," she said, "to ask your advice about Isaac. He isn't well, I know, because he does not act well; and what would feed him would feed a robin, he eats so little. I think of leaving here for a place where the air is more embracing, and where he can stave round and recooperate."

"Ah!" replied he. "That is indeed an important step."

"I wished to ask your opinion whether living contagious to a river would be dilatory to him, for I think he has a tenderness to bronchical difficulty."

"I don't think it would be bad for him," replied the doctor, "unless he fell into the river, and couldn't swim."

"I'm shore I'm glad to hear you say so," said the dame, her anxiety evidently much relieved.

"But what about his schooling? Are there

good schools where you intend to go?" asked the doctor.

"Yes: there are degraded schools, just as they are here, and education is dispensed with pretty much the same."

"Where is the location, madam?"

"Oh! it is quite different from that, I assure you, and not low at all. The situation is lovely. The house is by the side of a creek that is not very roominous, but it is great for eelgrass."

"I mean, where is it?" and the doctor smiled at her misapprehension.

"It is on the Hardup Railroad; and I shall buy two shares of the stock if it will not cost more than five dollars for both, so that Isaac and I can come up to the stockholders' meetings."

"Your plan, my dear madam, is a good one. I certainly think the change will benefit the lad; and though we shall miss him undoubtedly, the knowledge that he is bettered by going will sustain those he leaves behind. In fact, I think that all the neighbors, seeing the advantage it will be to him, will surrender every personal consideration, and, in the kindness of their hearts, be glad that he has gone."

"I am truly delighted to know this. Our new home is not so exorbitant as some; but, if you can come to see us in your summer vexation, you will find room to be entertained."

"I shall certainly be most happy."

Ike had come in, and was looking for his candy. Dr. Spooner arose to take his leave; but the molasses troubled him, and he felt, as he said "Good-by," like a big bee which had been revelling in stolen sweets, and was taking some away with him syruptitiously.

When the time arrived for the promulgation of the fact that she was going, Mrs. Partington was surprised and much gratified to find so deep an interest felt in her boy. His health, the neighbors all said, should not be neglected on any account; and, as Dr. Spooner had intimated, they were not disposed to present a single obstacle. They hoped he would be better by going; and certainly there seemed much room for improvement.

Ike was unfortunate in being too popular. He was an active, bright-eyed, curly-headed, roguish little fellow, — with no doubt about the latter quality, — a leader in all boyish sports, known to everybody as a lively lad; but, though engaged in

many an act called "mischievous" by those who had forgotten that they were once boys themselves, there was nothing malicious in his conduct. Of course he got a bad reputation; and, when any thing was done for which an author was wanted, it had become a sort of fashion with the neighbors to say that it was "one of Ike's tricks." Many a time was this said as an excuse for their own boys, in whom they could see no wrong except what they had caught, as it were like the measles; and so Ike had to bear all the ills that were his own, and theirs too. But he didn't care. Who ever knew a boy that was morbidly sensitive, or cared a continental copper what people said about him? He lives in a world of his own, — a sort of Ishmael on a small scale. And this name applies very well; for Ishmael means "God who hears," and He cares for the human boy, whatever any may say, and all the boy's eccentricities harden in good time into manly character.

In due time Mrs. Partington packed up her furniture and other portable goods, and left for her new home. The good dame went with the last load, sitting with the driver on the front seat; while Ike, astride of a trunk on the hind part,

threw chunks of coal from a near basket at a dog which came smelling round the wagon as if from a wish to know what it all meant. Mrs. Partington waved her umbrella in farewells, which were cordially returned, until an intervening corner shut

the scene from her view, perhaps forever.

The spot which she had chosen for her new abode was named Clam Corner by general usage, because of the many clams to be found there on the shore. "The Creek," however, was the polite name it bore. Her house was on the bank of the creek, which was a beautiful stream — what there

was of it — flowing in from Rapid River. The river also bore an Indian name, which signified "Fish Water;" and although its name may not be found on any map, it was regarded by those who lived near it as the grandest river in the world.

The "Corner" was part of Rivertown, a populous city: and there was quite a settlement along the bank of the creek; and, of the houses composing this, Mrs. Partington's was one of the neatest. An orchard, consisting of one scattering tree, sloped back from the cottage to the water's edge; and the view from the back windows extended as far as the eye could reach, including the little village of Grace on the opposite bank, an old graveyard on the right, and on the left the creek, with deserted brick-works in the distance. The convenience of water made it a fine place for a boat in summer; and one could see that in winter there must be a grand chance to skate there, if the water froze over, which seemed very probable. There was considerable of a hill at no great distance, promising rare coasting; and nearer, on a little rise of the land, an old cellar, which some one had dug out

many years before, and, failing to build over it, had left it for the accommodation of frogs, in summer, to hold free concerts in.

The reputation of Mrs. Partington and Ike had reached the "Corner" before they did; and their coming caused a stir that it had not experienced for a long time. The boys regarded Ike as an important addition to their numbers; and they flocked round, thick as bees, to welcome him. They were all "hail fellow, well met," in ten minutes. Ike's reputation had also reached the ears of Mr. Grum, a rough and disagreeable person who lived in the house next to the cottage of Mrs. Partington; and he was prejudiced against him from the start. He was living alone, with his niece for a housekeeper, his wife being dead, and his children grown up and moved away; and he saw trouble ahead from this newcomer. He was out in his front yard — a fine green lawn — the next morning after the new arrival, and watched Ike, not very pleasantly, as he came along whistling, with a switch cutting off the heads of the weeds along the path.

"Hallo!" cried he gruffly, or Grumly, "what's *your* name?"

"Ike Partington, sir," replied the boy, as he spoke stripping the leaves from a green twig that struggled through Grum's fence.

"Well, let that bush alone, and see that you behave yourself."

"I'll try, sir."

"You'd better. Don't let us have any of your city pranks here. If I catch you in any mischief about my place, I'll take your hide off. Do you hear?"

"Yes, sir," kicking at a mullein-root.

"Be sure you keep away from this grass. If you step your foot on it, I'll take a whip to you. Do you hear?"

"Yes, I ain't deaf." And then he for the first time looked at the grass, and thought, that, of all things in the world, he just then would like to play circus on that grass, and stood looking at it so earnestly that Grum told him to go home; and he went, giving a defiant look at the old man, who thought he saw mischief in that boy. Ike didn't care for his threats; and all day long he thought of that little grass-plat, not two rods square, when there were acres of as good grass all around that he didn't think of at all. He saw in his sleep,

that night, a circus of fifty boys trampling down Grum's grass, while the old man stood at an upper window, threatening them with a double-barrelled shot-gun, which wouldn't go off; and he awakened himself with laughing.

There was another neighbor, of quite a different sort, with whom Ike soon got acquainted. This was "Captain Bob," as everybody called him; and a queer old fellow he was too. He was very rough-looking in his dress, — wore a woollen jacket, thick pants, with wide legs, inside of his boots, and a Scotch cap on his head; but he had a cheery face and a good word at all times, and won Ike's heart in spite of his uncouth looks. He had been a sailor in his young days, and had lots of wonderful stories to tell about the sea. To sustain his salt-water habit, he kept several boats on the creek, which he let to the boys, with all of whom he was an immense favorite. His wife used to say, as she saw them round him, that he was the greatest boy of them all.

"How fare'ee, lad?" he would cry, as he saw Ike go by; and Ike would say, "All right, Cap'n," showing that they were the best of

friends. The captain told his wife that he liked that little chap, for he had the real ginger in him; and Ike believed that since the days of Noah there had been no such navigator as Captain Bob.

Ike soon grew familiar with the people and the locality; but one object of the latter, more than any other, attracted his attention. The street through the Corner ended on a cross street, one side of which was formed by a high wall; and beyond this the boys could not go. This wall enclosed on three sides an old mansion and grounds, the fourth bordering on the creek. A crevice had been cut through the broad wooden gate which opened into the grounds; and beyond it could be had limited views of luscious fruit which hung near the earth, and on these the eyes of the boys gloated every day. There was, however, the shadow of a black dog named Jack, whose bark was not very pleasant to hear; and it restrained longing to their side of the wall, keeping them honest. Ike longed with the rest; but it was ineffectual, for the present at least.

Before a ship goes into a battle the decks are always cleared; and so this chapter has been simply preparation for the action of Ike and his

friends during the year to which time it is limited. The scene all laid out, and the main characters introduced, there is nothing to prevent smooth sailing; and the next chapter will show how Ike got along at school.

CHAPTER II.

IKE GOES TO SCHOOL. — PLOT AND COUNTERPLOT. — TEACHER TWICE SOLD. — THE BEWITCHED CHAIR. — "JUMP HIM, JACKSON!" — ONE FOR THE TEACHER.

MRS. PARTINGTON was desirous of putting Ike into the "degraded" school, as she expressed it, and consulted her neighbor Mr. Grum about it, because she saw that he had a bald head, and deemed that it was full of wisdom. It reminded her, as she looked at it, of an unabridged dictionary.

"Is there a degraded school near here?" she asked.

"They all are, I should think, from the kind of boys they turn out," said he. "I have to keep an eye on my grass when they are round."

"Is the teacher sufficient?"

"Quite so: I don't see how he could be any more."

"Does he practise moral training in his school?"

"I guess so: the boys are great trainers."

"I don't want my boy to train maliciously, as they do in some schools, with guns, and real persecution caps on 'em."

"Very proper, ma'am; but he must be careful and not train on my grass."

So, after going through the usual forms, Ike was duly enrolled a scholar in "graded school No. 4," Rivertown. He went to school on Monday, with Mrs. Partington's smiles and an armful of books; she having charged him to bemean himself exceptionably, and try for the medal, and he would be sure to win it, as he certainly was a very medalsome boy. He soon got the "hang of the schoolhouse," and awakened such an interest in the teacher, the very first day, that he watched him almost all the time. The teacher saw, undoubtedly, that he was a boy of remarkable merit. Before he had been there a week, by close application he had cut a hole through his desk, spilled his ink on the floor, and took a place so far down in his class that it was very fortunate for him the class was no longer. To enable him to apply himself more diligently to his studies, he was made

to stand on various pedestals, like a Hindoo idol; but this only made the boys laugh, though he made no sign to cause it, so far as the teacher could see, and he proved a capital example of how not to do it.

The teacher was a sharp and severe man, who had few pleasant words to waste on scholars, and gave them a frequent taste of "correction," as he termed it; but they took a different view of it, and called it "licking," and were not at all grateful for the favor intended. They had very little respect for the teacher, although they were afraid of him; and his school, for order, had the best reputation of any school in town. One blow of his rattan on the desk would produce the most perfect silence; and every one would take to studying, with one eye on the rattan, as if his life depended on the effort.

He seemed to look upon all the scholars as conspirators against his peace and dignity; and Ike, from the first moment of his entering the school, was an object of especial distrust. A boy can detect a feeling of this kind very quickly, and it does not cause him to feel very agreeably towards the one who suspects him. Do what he would, the teacher's eye was on him; and there was really

little encouragement to do well; and Ike thought that if an opportunity should arise when he could play a trick upon the teacher, he would do it. The occasion was not long in offering itself.

It was a serious offence to bring any book into the school except those they studied, and several boys had been "corrected" for presuming to do so. One day the teacher, on looking as usual towards Ike, who sat apparently very busy with his task, saw, or thought he saw, the end of another book projecting beyond the one that he should be studying. He was eager to detect him in the very act, and so would not speak to him, nor let him know that he suspected him; but watching the boy stealthily a moment, till he was quite sure he was right, he left his desk to make a circuit of the room, that he might come up behind the culprit, and surprise him. He chuckled to himself as he thought about it, and planned some new mode of punishing the offender. What an example he would make of him when caught! He went first to the window, and looked out; then he passed quietly down the side aisle, glancing at the work the boys were doing. Reaching the back of the room, he paused a moment, and then moved slowly

along the centre aisle, on tiptoe, to where the transgressor sat. He knew that the boy was guilty, because he could plainly see two books open before him. He knew also that he was not observed by the offender, who seemed entirely absorbed by his book. He therefore crept along stealthily, like a cat aiming for a mouse, and when within a few benches of him, before he had a chance to spring, Ike suddenly pulled down the top book, and put it into his desk, which was open in front. Stepping forward then, the teacher said, in his severest tone, —

"You call that studying, do you, Partington?"

"Yes, sir," said Ike, apparently confused.

"What book is that which you have just put into your desk?"

"My lesson, sir."

"Your *lesson*, indeed! Let me see it, sir!"

The book was taken out, with seeming reluctance; and it proved to be indeed the lesson of the morning. He saw that both books were the same; and, coloring away to the roots of his hair, the discomfited teacher moved back to his desk, while Ike, with a sly twist in the corner of his mouth, winked at one of his neighbors, and a

simmering laugh was heard for an instant, which was immediately checked by the master's shout of "*Silence!*"

His suspicion of Ike increased after this; and his eye was on the supposed offender all the time, every look of whom seemed to be defiance, every gesture rebellion. The boy could not move his arm without awaking in the teacher's mind the impression that there was treason in it. Ike saw an opening here for another trick.

The penalty for communicating, in any way, was severe.

One morning, as the teacher sat overlooking his school, his eye rested upon Ike, as usual; and, though the youngster seemed very busy, he saw something in his conduct which fixed his attention on him immediately. Ike took a slip of paper from beneath his desk, and apparently wrote something on it; then he slyly slipped the paper between the leaves of a book, and passing it to his neighbor, without speaking, made a motion towards Moody, who sat the other side of the room. The teacher saw the book pass from hand to hand until it reached Moody. Before the boy had a chance to open it, he cried out, —

"Bring that book here, Moody."

Moody complied very readily, and brought the book to the teacher's desk.

"What book is that, Moody?"

"My 'rithmetic, sir."

"Who sent it to you?"

"Guess 'twas Partington, sir: I left it at his desk."

"Partington, come here. Did you send this book?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why did you send it to him?"

"'Cause 'twas his, and against the rules to carry it to him."

"What did you put into it before you sent it?"

"A piece of paper, sir."

"What was on the paper?"

"I didn't see any thing, sir."

"You didn't, did you? Well, I will see."

He took the book, found the slip, inspected it carefully, and then laid it in again. There was not a mark on it.

"What did you mean by putting that paper in the book?"

"To mark the morning lesson, sir."

"Didn't you mean to deceive me by pretending to write on it?"

"How did I know you was watching me?"

This finished the examination. No offence had been committed, and the teacher felt that he had again been humbugged by a sharp-witted boy.

Not long after this an affair occurred which affected the whole school. On a warm summer afternoon, when the boys were out at recess, the teacher, who was much oppressed by the weather, sat down at his desk to think. The current of his thought, however, became disturbed by the influence of the weather. The warmth, the laughter of the boys at their play not near enough to be noisy, and the stillness of the room, had a drowsy effect on him, and in a few moments he fell asleep! The boys had been out beyond their time; and, though they made no objection, they were curious to see how it was that they were thus favored. They went very softly to the door, and peeped in; and, seeing the master asleep, they were much elated. It would not be good manners, they thought, to awaken him; for, if he chose to sleep, it was no business of theirs: and therefore they "let him sleep on," like Sir John Moore at Corunna.

Some fifteen minutes more were added to his nap, and the waiting grew tiresome. Then the spirit of mischief inspired them to play some trick on the slumberer. So, after debating what to do, they delegated one of their number to do what he had a mind to.

The old school-bell was rung by a rope attached to a long curved iron lever on top, which rope came down behind the teacher's chair. Creeping in very softly, the boy set the bell noiselessly, tied the rope around the bottom rung of the chair, and left to await the result. They did not have to wait long: for they began to make a great noise; and one, putting his head in at the door, shouted "Muggins!" as loud as he could bawl.

The teacher started "like a guilty thing," looked at his watch an instant, and then, leaving his seat, turned round to ring the bell and call them in. To his surprise the chair jumped up, turned over with a crash, and danced as if it were bewitched. In vain he asked who did it. Nobody knew. Then he thought that to harshly push the inquiry might prove the worse for him, and so he apologized to the boys; and while he remained with them was less severe towards them, and got

along a great deal better. It was never told who did the bell trick, but Ike was there.

Ike got caught under the milder discipline. One day he and Clem Jackson contrived a rude checker-board on the cover of an atlas; and, as there was only a narrow space between the desks at which they sat, they determined on having a game. They watched the master to see if he was noticing them; but he had a number of the scholars round his desk, who were all asking questions, and they seemed quite hidden from his sight. So Ike put the board on a little pile of books upon the floor; and, preparing their men, the boys began to play. They would give an occasional glance toward the teacher, to assure themselves that they were safe, and were having a fine time, the other boys in the vicinity looking on to note the progress of the game. The checker-men were small pieces of writing-book cover; one of the boys having the blue side, the other the white. They couldn't play very well, and so it required more attention. The interest increased as they went on, until their glances at the teacher were less frequent; but they thought they could see, out of the "corner of their eye," that he was still

engaged with the crowd of questioners at his desk, and felt perfectly unobserved. They played on, therefore, in fancied security, and got to the most exciting part of the game, Jackson having the advantage, when —

"JUMP HIM, JACKSON!" said a terrible well-known voice right behind them.

It was the teacher, who had left the inquirers standing at the desk while he went for the delinquents, having seen them all the while.

"Jump him, Jackson!" he repeated.

But Jackson at that moment would rather have jumped out of the window, and gone home, while Ike was overwhelmed. The boys laughed, and the teacher enjoyed a splendid triumph as he walked to his desk. He did not punish them, for he thought their mortification was enough; and Jackson was called "*Jumping Jack*" in school, by the boys, from that day.

CHAPTER III.

THE CREEK POETS. — BALLAD OF BULL PAD-DOCK. — ROUND THE OLD CELLAR. — IKE DROPS IN AT A FROGS' CONCERT.

THERE were lively times at the "Corner," the summer that Ike came there to live. The boys made it specially noisy on the summer evenings about the old cellar on the hill, to the great disgust of the frogs, who sat and watched them with great wondering eyes, but kept well out of their way, not wishing an introduction to them, — like Mrs. Partington, who did not wish to be introduced to anybody she was not acquainted with. They — the boys, not the frogs — would sit on the great rock near the cellar, or down on the margin of the creek, and watch the lightning which flashed up in the west, each taking his turn for the next flash, as if it were a swing, and the one who had the brightest exulting about it.

On one occasion they had gathered about the

great rock, and had told wonderful stories until they were weary, when Tom Hall, with a new inspiration, said, —

"Come, let's make up some rhymes."

"What fun is there in that?" queried one of the number, who had no more rhyme in him than the frogs that were croaking in the cellar.

"No matter: let's try," said Tom.

"Well, you begin."

"Here goes, then: only don't be too hard on a fellow if he doesn't do very well, —

"There was an old fellow named Stoker:
Oh, he was a terrible soaker!
His nose in the night
Folks thought was a light,
And it shone like a red-hot poker."

This was received with a round of applause. It was tip-top, they all said, and every one felt ambitious to do as well.

"Come, Walters, your turn next," said a half-dozen voices; and Sim Walters said he would try to make a rhyme about Captain Bob.

"Here goes: —

"Captain Bob is a jolly old brick;
No one to him can shake a stick:
O'er many a land he's been a goner,
But mostly down here to Clam Corner."

"Pretty good," said Bill Tibbets; "but I don't believe the captain would like it very well."

"He won't know any thing about it; and it's only rhyme, you know, any way."

"That's so," from a number.

"Well, now let's see what you can do, Bill," said Walters.

Bill straightened himself up to it, pulled down his vest, and began, —

"There was a man in our town
Whose name was Mr. Grum;
And when old Scratchy called for him,
He said he wouldn't come."

This raised a great laugh, and Bill was voted a poet right away. But he said he didn't like to be personal. He had no idea, himself, how it was coming out when he began, and he couldn't help saying it; showing what a mysterious thing poetical inspiration is.

"Now, Ike, your turn: give us something sentimental."

Ike said he was not much at rhyming, but would do his best; and after thinking a few seconds he went on, —

"The cow flies over the meadow hill,
Lit by the torch of the whippoorwill;
The codfish sings in the turnip tree,
And the woodchuck chirps to the bouncing bee."

"That's good rhyme, but there isn't much reason to it," said Joe Laighton.

"Well," replied Ike, "I should like to know if lots of poetry isn't the same way. I've seen poetry that's called good, that's got no more reason than mine has."

The others said he was right, and called upon Joe to show what he could do better than that. So Joe, looking down into the old cellar where the frogs were singing their evening song, thus let himself out: —

"The frog he is a funny little fish:
He's got a mouth like a pudding-dish.
He sits in the cellar all day long,
And sings at night his opera-song."

"Pretty good!" was the verdict of the boys.

"*Pretty* good!" said Joe: "is that all you've got to say? Now, I call it the best thing yet. Come, Lem Tucker, you were one that said 'twas *pretty* good: now let us see if you can make any thing that will begin with it."

"Oh, I can't! 'tisn't in me," said Lem.

"That's bosh; for I heard you the other day reeling off about a rod of rhymes on a frog, if it wasn't so good as mine. So fire away."

"That's a piece I learned to speak in school. That isn't mine."

"Well, let's have it," they all cried.

"'Tisn't funny," said he.

"No matter: let's have it."

Lem's voice was a little shaky at first, but he soon gained confidence as he recited the spirited ballad of

BULL OF PAD-DOCK.

Lazily sitting upon a log,
Near by his home the lilies among,
The dandy of the meadowy bog,
Bull of Pad-dock, is croaking his song:
"Bull Pad-dock! Bull Pad-dock!
Chock, chuck, chock!

Here I snugly and safely rest,
Hid from gaze in the hassock's breast.
Chug, chug, chug!"

Bull of Pad-dock is jauntily dressed,
Wearing a bright green fancy coat,
Pants of the same, with yellow vest,
And a pure white choker round his throat.
Bull Pad-dock! Bull Pad-dock!
Chock, chuck, chock!
See what a coat!— not wrinkled a bit,—
Did you ever see a finer fit?
Chug, chug, chug!

Bull of Pad-dock has got a wife,
Living below with her kindred folks:
She sometimes peeps at outdoor life,
While he his song in the sunshine croaks.
Bull Pad-dock! Bull Pad-dock!
Chock, chuck, chock!
But he greets her coming with surly tone,
And says he had rather be left alone.
Chug, chug, chug!

Her froglings crowd the lily-pads,
Neatly clad in their coats of green,—
The frogling lasses and frogling lads,
With snow-white aprons neat and clean.
Bull Pad-dock! Bull Pad-dock!
Chock, chuck, chock!

She from her young ones seldom goes out,
For she knows the pickerel fish are about.
Chug, chug, chug!

Bull of Pad-dock don't care a snap,
Like many a human we have seen:
No family cares disturb his nap
When he pillows his head on the cresses green.
Bull Pad-dock! Bull Pad-dock!
Chock, chuck, chock!
Oh, an easy life lives the meadow frog,
While his wife takes care of the babes in the bog!
Chug, chug, chug!

The boys told him that they liked it very well, and wished it were longer and better; and Lem was proud of his performance. All claimed that their own rhymes were the best, and that some other time they would try again.

It sometimes happened that they told such terrible stories about giants, ghosts, and hobgoblins, that some of them were afraid to go home alone; and one night there had been a run of such stories that made the hair of the timid stand up so as almost to push their hats off. They were very glad to have Captain Bob come and sit down with them, as it relieved them of a great deal of

their fear. They all felt, that, if the biggest ghost that ever was known were to come, the captain would be more than a match for it.

"Captain, do you believe in ghosts?" questioned Ike.

"Not much," replied Captain Bob; "but did any of ye ever hear of the haunted house that they had in Rivertown a good many years ago?"

They told him they had not.

"Well," he continued, "that was a pretty lively sort of a ghost, I tell you. The old Dunkle House, after the death of 'Uncle Dunkle' as all used to call him, was shut up as tight as a bottle, and nobody wanted to live there. The longer it was empty the more folks didn't want to occupy it; and so at last it kinder got the name of being haunted. As soon as this got round, almost everybody believed it; and many had stories to tell of lights seen there, and poundings heard, and white shapes at the windows; and folks hurried by the house after dark for fear. Then the people really began to hear sounds, like heavy blows, in different rooms at night, and sometimes they would hear 'em even in daylight. Early one evening old Mr. Styles the blacksmith, whose

shop was right opposite the house, heard the pounding, and saw the people running by, half scared out of their wits. He didn't believe in ghosts, nor in much of any thing else; and so, after listening a few minutes, he took a big blacksmith's hammer, and went over to interview the ghost. He tried the door, which was fast, and heard some loud pounding inside that jarred the house. Then he gave the door a blow with his hammer, which forced it open, and in he went. He heard the knocking overhead, and a deep groan. Up he went, and then he heard the sounds in another room. He followed from room to room, until he heard the sounds down cellar. He followed down, and then all was still. The cellar was not so dark that he couldn't see, but there was no sign of the ghost there. He was on the point of leaving, when he saw a barrel in the deeper shadows of the cellar. It was a common flour-barrel, with the head whole; and, lifting his hammer, he broke the head in with a crash, at the same time nearly breaking in the head of little Johnny Purslaine the tailor, that popped up out of the barrel, beneath which he had been hid. The blacksmith led him out by the ear, and told

the ones who had gathered round that he had caught the ghost. They were going to mob Johnny; but Styles told 'em, that, if Johnny was a rogue, they were cowards, which he thought was worse, and so they let him go. The house was let the next day, and not a ghost was seen or heard in it afterwards."

"'Twas mean to be afraid," said Andy Cate.

"I'd ha' gone right in," echoed Ike. "I wouldn't ha' been afraid."

"You wouldn't, hey?" replied the captain. "P'raps, my young friend, if you had a chance to try your courage you would come out of it as bad as I did once."

"Were *you* ever scared?" asked the boys.

Captain Bob laughed. "Well, you may jedge yourselves," said he. "About a hundred years ago a man named Clough was hanged, up here a bit, for killing another man; and he was buried at the foot of the gallows where two roads cross. When I was a boy it was said by the old folks, that if any one should go at night, and stamp on the grave, saying with a loud voice, 'Clough, what were you hanged for?' he would say nothing. One night I was stumped to try it. I thought

there wasn't any thing that could scare me, for I felt pretty courageous, and so I said I'd go; and I went, all alone, as brave as you please. When I came near the place, I began to have the queerest feelings, and wished that I hadn't undertaken the job. But I would be laughed at if I backed out; and though I felt my knees shake, and the sweat pour off my face, I stamped on the grave, and shouted, '*Clough, what were you hanged for?*'"

Here the captain paused, and laughed to himself.

"Well, what did you hear?" cried a half-dozen impatient voices.

"To tell the truth," replied the captain, "I didn't wait to hear any thing, but put for home as fast as I could run. I dare say, however, he said nothing, just as much as though I had waited." The captain chuckled as he finished, as if he enjoyed the recollection very much.

The boys saw the joke, and gave three cheers for Captain Bob.

There were boisterous games played around the old cellar, when "Bloody Tom" and "Whip to Barbary" made the night hideous to quiet people, whose ears would be assailed by the boyish duet, —

"Who goes round my house by night?"
"Only Bloody Tom."
"Who is it steals my sheep by night?"
"Only this fat one."

Or the other equally noisy:—

"How many miles to Barbary?"
"Threescore and ten."
"Can I get there by candle-light?"
"Yes, and back again."
"Whip to Barbary!"

This last was followed by a race around the old cellar, and down through the street of the Corner, like a hurricane, until the boys reached Barbary, —the place from which they started,—puffing and blowing like young porpoises, but showing very healthy lungs as they disputed about the game; for boys always will dispute, and never know exactly when they are satisfied. On one of these occasions Ike attempted, while racing around the old cellar, to trip the one behind him, and throw him down among the frogs. He was full of the fun of the thing, and laughed to himself as he imagined the figure the fellow would cut as he rolled down the embankment; but when he made

the attempt the one before him stumbled and fell, and Ike, falling over him, pitched head first into the water. Such a shout went up as he crawled out, all dripping with wet! Served him right, every just-minded boy will say; but Ike felt as if he was a sort of martyr, and didn't laugh any to speak of. The frogs complained to one another, after the boys had gone, because Ike's dropping in upon them so suddenly had interrupted a first-class concert.

"Isaac!" said Mrs. Partington as he came in drenched with water, "what do you want to act so like the Probable Son for? You are not a fish."

"I fell in," replied Ike.

"Well, now go to bed; and, if you fall in again, you and I will fall out."

CHAPTER IV.

THE OVEN BY THE SHORE. — THE SEA-MONSTER. — CAPTAIN BOB SENT FOR. — THE GREAT SHOW. — THE CAPTAIN TREATS ON GRAPE-CULTURE.

THE creek was a scene of rare sport for the boys who met there on Monday and Saturday afternoons to sail or swim. There was a rich deposit of clams along the shore; and when the tide was out the boys would dig these ground-nuts, as Ike called them, and roast them with fire made of the chips that had drifted ashore and dried. No dish cooked at home tasted half so nice as these clams, seasoned with smoke and black mud; and the labor of digging them was prime fun, although the boys would have thought it hard work if they had been compelled to hoe out weeds or split kindling-wood with half the labor.

One afternoon they determined to build a "real oven" down by the shore, in which to bake their clams. So they hired Captain Bob's boat, "The

Jolly Robin," at two cents an hour, and brought a load of imperfect bricks from the old brick-yard up the creek; and one having brought a shovel, another a trowel, a third a hatchet, and others something else to work with, they took off their jackets, and went at it. The confusion attending the building of the Tower of Babel could hardly have been greater than that which was shown here. All would be engineers. The boy who brought the shovel insisted on his right to do the digging, the one with the trowel to lay the bricks, while each one claimed some special office for the tool he had brought.

There was a stone, about two feet high, jutting out from the bank, which was straight up and down on one side, as if it had been prepared on purpose for them; and they decided to build the oven up against it. So the dirt was levelled off beside the stone by the boy with the shovel, the one with the hatchet cut the bank next it smoothly down, while the trowel fellow superintended the making of mortar out of clay. All busied themselves. A flat stone was found for the bottom of the oven, which was bedded in mortar; then two rows of bricks were laid up against the

side of the bank, and others, the same height, on the outside, the rock forming the back, the front below left open for the furnace. Then a flat stone was brought and laid on the bricks, for the floor of the oven; two rows more of bricks were laid on this, all round, another flat stone put on top, and the oven was done. A little piece of the corner of the oven floor had been chipped off, round which a chimney of clay had been built for a flue, which was to lead the smoke off.

There could not have been much more exultation at the finishing of Solomon's Temple than attended the completion of this great work. Even those who had done nothing but bring the mortar claimed that its superiority was owing to them; which, of course, was noisily denied by those of the shovel and trowel. But there arose a dispute now as to who should dig the clams. Each one contended that he had done his share of the work; but the tide was coming in, and they all saw that their oven would be of no use if they had no clams to bake in it, and so they concluded to sacrifice a little to expediency, and "pitched in" with a will to secure their bivalves before the tide covered them up. This was soon done, and

then preparations were made for lighting the fire. Dry chips had been brought, which, with a newspaper, had been put into the furnace; and now another altercation arose as to who should have the honor of "touching her off." It was decided in favor of Tom Whidden, the boy with the shovel, and great excitement prevailed.

"Now get out of the way," said he, "or some of you'll get drawn up the chimney."

He scratched a match, and applied it to the kindling stuff. It took fire, blazed a moment, and then went out in smoke. Great disappointment was felt by all; and the opinion was expressed, in no very flattering terms, that Tom hadn't touched it off right, whereat he was very indignant. He yielded to another, who, after the kindlings had again been fixed, tried it with no better success.

"Here, Ike, you try it," cried half a dozen voices.

Ike was sitting upon the bank near the chimney, to see, as he said, the smoke come out; and when they called him he came down.

"'Tis easy enough to do that," he said.

"Well, le's see you try it."

He stooped down and fixed the kindlings, rummaged in his pockets for some more paper, made a little opening among the wood, and applied the match. The fire took, the smoke drew up through the little chimney, and the whole furnace was in a blaze.

"Hurrah, hurrah!" yelled the boys, and danced wildly around. "Bring more wood!" and every one ran to get fuel, the fire going splendidly. It was not for a moment suspected that Ike had had his hand on the flue, as he sat there, to feel the heat as well as see the smoke, when the others tried to light it; and he got considerable praise for what he did not really deserve, and so much the worse for him.

But the success was not complete; for the wet work required more fire than could be raised to dry it, the stone forming the bottom of the oven was too thick to be heated through, and the afternoon was growing short: so they compromised by baking their clams in the old way, and left the oven for future experiment. But that very night a high tide came up which surrounded the oven: the wind blew over the creek, and dashed the water upon it; and when they went to see it the next day, they found it a miserable ruin!

But it is said that it is an ill wind that don't blow anywhere; and as Ike and the rest looked upon the wreck, and fretted about it, one cried out, "Look there!" and pointed to a pile of eel-grass that had drifted ashore, in the midst of which were seen a pair of terrible eyes, that seemed to be watching them. The eyes were as large as a man's, and had an evil look in them, which made the boys scramble up the bank with terror. Looking down they saw what seemed to be the form of a monstrous fish entangled in the seaweed, which flapped its tail as if trying to free itself.

"Run for Captain Bob," cried Ike.

Joe Hayes and Si Moody started off upon a smart run, to bring the captain; while Ike remained to look after the prisoner, which might be a whale, or a shark, or a sea-serpent, so far as he knew. Finding that it could not free itself, he ventured near it; and the great eyes looked more evil as he gazed upon them. The fish struggled in the water, and Ike was afraid it would get away before Captain Bob came; but soon he heard voices, and the captain appeared, armed with a long boat-hook, with the boys by his side.

"Hallo!" cried the captain from the top of the bank, "what you got there?"

"The sea-serpent, I guess," said Ike, as the captain came down to where he stood.

"Rayther guess not: that ain't no sea-serpent; for, let me tell you, if it was one he'd be outside of you in about two shakes of a sheep's tail."

"Well, what is it?"

"'Tis a curious critter, that's plain enough. — Now walk out here, old chap, and let us see what you look like."

As he spoke, the captain was feeling around, with his boat-hook, where he supposed the creature's mouth was; and as he found it he said, "Now bend on, boys, and we'll soon see what he is."

They took hold with him; and, giving a pull, they drew out the ugliest looking monster that they or anybody else had ever seen. It was an immense fish, at least five feet long, formed something like a sculpin, its body looking rough like the bark of a tree. Its mouth was large enough to take in the head of a boy, and its eyes looked terrible out of the water.

"That's a monkfish," said Captain Bob: "seen lots of 'em down to Chaleur, but never saw one round here afore."

The fish jumped and struggled, but at last yielded to its fate; and when it was dead Cap-

tain Bob and the boys hauled it up into the field near the old cellar. The captain, having performed his duty as a man and a mariner, went home, leaving to the boys the disposal of their prize.

"Now what's to be done with it?" said Si.

"Let's throw it among the frogs," suggested Joe.

"No; I'll tell you what," said Ike: "we'll make an exhibition of it."

"Agreed," cried the others.

The boys took four stakes from a neighboring fence, and drove them into the ground in a quadrangular form, about the fish; and then Ike went home to procure something to make a tent of. He rummaged high and low, throwing out an old patchwork quilt, a bed-sack, and a tablecloth which had out-served its usefulness.

"What possesses you now?" cried Mrs. Partington, amazed at his conduct: "what are you doing?"

"Going to make a tent," replied Ike.

"For what purpose?"

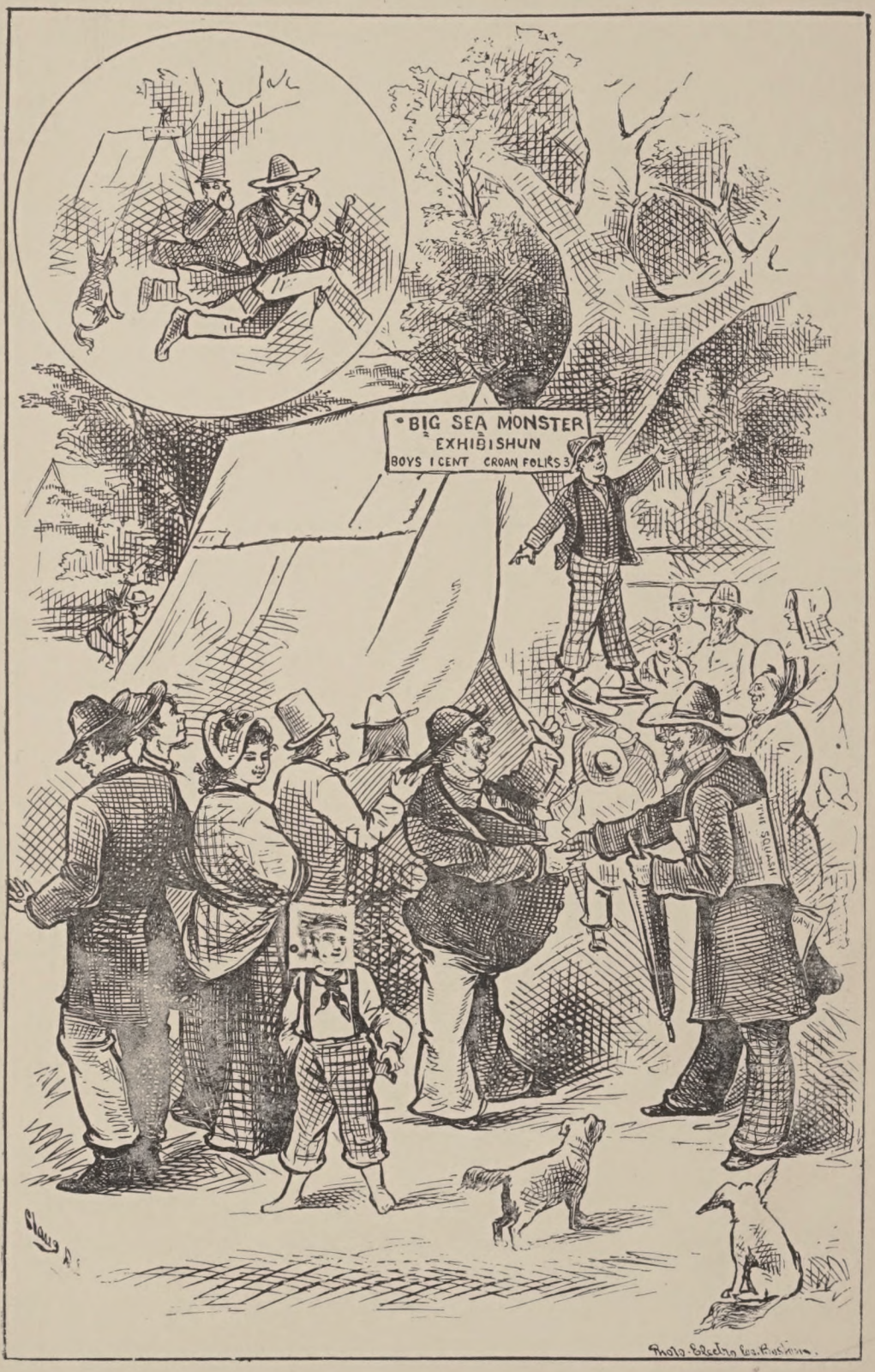
"'Tain't a porpoise: 'tis a monkey-fish, so Captain Bob says."

"Why, what do you mean by that, Isaac?"

"We've caught a big fish, and are going to exhibit him."

"Where?"

"Out there where the boys are."


BIG SEA MONSTER
EXHIBISHUN
BOYS 1 CENT GROAN FOLKS 3
THE SQUASH

The old dame, without her bonnet, went out to see the big fish; and Ike followed, bearing the materials for the tent, which he promised Mrs. Partington he would be very careful of, and said he would give her a season ticket to the show for the use of them. The quilt, the bed-sack, and the tablecloth answered the purpose capitally, forming a serviceable tent large enough, stretched about the poles, to completely hide the fish; and then, getting the cover of Mrs. Partington's shawl-box, they painted a sign, with wheel-grease, which read, —

"BIG SEA MONSTER.

EXHIBISHUN.

BOYS 1 CENT. GROAN FOLKS 3 CENTS."

"There," said Ike, "that'll bring 'em."

"Barnum couldn't ha' done no better," said Captain Bob, as he inspected the work; "and let me tell you that he never had a curiouser thing than that, only 'tisn't so big as some of 'em I've seen."

"Do they grow very big?" asked Ike.

"Bless you! yes; so big 'twould take more than ten yokes of oxen to get one up here. It isn't a very handsome beast, but it has a better look when it smiles."

The exhibition was held during off-school hours, in the mornings and afternoons; and the pennies came in pretty freely. The editor of "The Squash" came, and wrote an article about the wonder, which attracted much attention. After a few days, however, people began to be attracted away from it as far as they could get; and the exhibition closed with more than two dollars in the treasury to be divided, — Ike taking an extra share for supplying the tent and sign, — which, the boys thought, was a good deal better than "hooking" old iron to sell for the appropriate celebration of the "Glorious Fourth." They gave the fish to Captain Bob to bury at the roots of his grapevine, to improve, as he said, the "flavior" of his grapes.

"Will that reprove the taste?" asked Mrs. Partington.

"Certainly, ma'am," replied Captain Bob. "That vine, out there now, was once a Concord. I planted three dead cats at the root of it, and, if you will believe me, it is now a *Cat*-awba."

"A singular thing, sir; but, in profligating flowers, can their flagrance be infected by such means?"

"I dare say; for I emptied my shaving-cup several times out at the window on a lalock-bush, and the blossoms smelt like Windsor soap."

"That's very curious," and Mrs. Partington pondered upon it.

CHAPTER V.

VOYAGES ON THE CREEK. — "THE JOLLY ROBIN." — THE STRANGE SAIL. — IKE SHIPWRECKED. — CAPTAIN BOB TO THE RESCUE. — SEA-YARN. — MRS. PARTINGTON ADMONISHES.

ONE of the greatest sources of amusement for the boys on the creek was to borrow one of Captain Bob's boats, and row about pretending to make discoveries. They would run up into coves, and land on points that projected into the creek, hoist a handkerchief on a stick, and take possession in the name of Clam Corner, giving them names, like the old navigators of which they had read. Once their cruise extended round the point which formed the water boundary of the old mansion previously named. A long wall extended from a little wharf the entire length of the grounds, inside of which was quite a pool, skirted by willows on the farther side. A part of the wall had fallen down; and, it being high tide, the boat

sailed over it easily. This they named "Ike Partington Inlet;" and, sailing in, they explored the new territory.

Peeping through the willows, they saw the orchard beyond, laden with fruit, which, though nowhere near ripe, was very tempting to them, by a provision of nature; for the human boy naturally covets green fruit, and will risk more to procure it than he would any amount of the same fruit when fully ripe and harmless. Ike, after looking carefully to see that nobody was round, ventured ashore, and crawled up through the grass to the nearest tree, to see if there were any windfalls on the ground, when he was attracted by a rushing sound through the grass, and knew that the big black dog was on duty, and was after him. He went back a good deal quicker than he came, without stopping to explain matters to the beast, and made the best time possible; for there is no better incentive to speed than the knowledge that a big dog is after one. Upon reaching the boat, he found that she had swung out about half a paddle's length from the shore. His first thought was to have her pulled in: the second was not to wait; and he leaped for her just as the dog reached

him, leaving in the animal's mouth a generous fragment of his pantaloons as a souvenir. This was a great adventure; and, as the boys rowed into deep water, they fancied they were like Captain Cook's crew, attacked by the Sandwich Island savages.

But the breeziest, jolliest, happiest times upon the creek were when the boat was impelled by a sail, and the boy who steered her fancied himself an admiral at least. One day Ike was too ill to go to school, and thought that a sail on the pond would be good for him. Getting Mrs. Partington's con-

sent, he procured Captain Bob's boat, "The Jolly Robin," and launched out on the waves of the creek. With much forethought he had taken one of Mrs. Partington's calico dresses with him to

use for a sail, in want of a better one. The breeze was too strong for him to strive against; so he kept near shore, and, sick as he was, got into the water, and dragged the boat, against the wind,

away round the head of the creek to the opposite side, from which quarter the wind blew. This was to allow him to sail across, and he proceeded to arrange his canvas. He had hauled the boat, stern first, upon the shore, and secured her so that she should not start before he was ready. Taking the dress, he thrust a stick through the arms, tied it to an oar planted upright against the fore seat of "The Jolly Robin," and then, fastening strings to the bottom of the dress, he drew them aft, tying them on each side. A bunch of seaweed, which he had playfully placed on top of the mast, gave the figure the appearance of an old lady, with extended arms, balancing on the bow of the boat; and he laughed at the conceit.

The wind filled the queer sail, and "The Jolly Robin" struggled to escape. Ike saw that all was right, and then let her go. She started off gallantly before the wind, the water dashing from her prow; and Ike, steering with a paddle, felt his blood tingle with excitement as he saw the shore glide by, forgetting, in his pride, even the sickness which had kept him from school.

Mrs. Partington sat at her back window, knitting, enjoying the fresh breeze which blew up

from the creek, bearing to her the pleasant odor of decaying eelgrass which lay along the shore, when she was attracted by the strange sail which was coming so swiftly down the creek. She could not see the helmsman, who was hidden from her view by the singular figure which seemed standing up in the boat; but the dress had a familiar look, and her spectacles fairly blazed with curiosity as the vessel drew nearer. When it reached a position opposite to where she sat, she recognized Ike, proudly steering, and, with intense excitement, called to him. He could hear her but faintly; and, lifting his paddle out of the water, he waved it over his head as a passing salute. Just as he did so, a flaw of wind, which seemed to have been watching for just this opportunity, caught the sail: the boat veered, and in an instant "The Jolly Robin" was capsized. Ike clung to the boat, and yelled for help.

As soon as she saw the accident, Mrs. Partington ran screaming to her neighbor Grum, and begged him to rescue her boy, who was drowning in the creek. He told her very coolly, though the day was warm, that he should do no such thing; that he had a rheumatiz in his knee; and as for

the boy, he could get out well enough, and that one intended to be hanged would never be drowned. She left in great indignation, and ran to Captain Bob, whom she found already engaged in preparations to rescue the young shipwrecked mariner. His other boats, "The Lively Turtle" and "The Storm Bug," were away, and so he had to invent some mode by which to reach him.

"Will he drown?" cried the old lady, wringing her hands.

"He can't, ma'am," replied the captain: "the water isn't more'n four feet deep where he is."

Captain Bob could very easily have waded out, but this would not be according to the rules of seamanship: so he took a large tub, made of the half of a hogshead; and, launching it overboard, he seized a garden-spade that was near, and, getting into the tub, attempted to paddle it out to the boat, upon which Ike was crying violently for help. It was hard work for the captain, who had sailed on a great many far voyages in fore-and-aft vessels, but had never been in a round-and-round one before; for, when he would try to paddle on one side, it would turn round instead of going ahead, and result the same when he tried the other

side. At last, by putting his spade behind, and prying his queer craft along, he began to make some headway; and after great effort he reached the wreck, and righted her, and Ike came ashore in her a "shipwrecked passenger," much to the delight of Mrs. Partington and the assembled neighbors. Ike made a very dismal figure, with his dripping clothes, and eelgrass in his hair; and Captain Bob told him to go home, and hang himself over a clothes-line to dry.

"I suppose you have seen many men drown," said one of the lookers-on.

"Well, I can't say that I have," replied the captain. "I forget how many chances there is of a fellow's 'scaping drownding, where there is any chance at all; but 'tis about the same as 'scaping being killed in battle, where they say it takes more'n a man's weight in bullets to kill him. Once when I was going to the West Indies, one of our men fell overboard, and we thought he was drownded sure; but we found him, three days arterwards, setting on the head of the rudder!"

"How came he there?"

"He took holt of the rudder-chains when he drifted by, and lifted himself up."

"Why didn't he holler?"

"Because he'd rather stay there than work."

"But how did he live without eating?"

"Why, he'd climb into the cabin-window nights, and hook enough of the captain's provender to last all next day."

"But"—

"No matter about any more," said the captain: "some folks is made to tell stories, and some is made to believe 'em, and so the balance is kept jist right; and that's what's the matter."

So they asked no more questions.

Ike was put to bed as soon as he got home, and went through a severe course of bitter tea and reproof, in order to keep out the cold. The next morning at breakfast Mrs. Partington pointed at a dress hanging on a line in view of the window, and said, —

"Do you see that garment, you offensive boy?"

"Yes," said Ike very penitently.

"Captain Roberts brought that to me this morning, all satiated with water, and said he found it in the boat. Now, what did you take it for?"

"Took it for sail."

"Took it for sale! I could have sold it myself

yesterday to a gentleman for a pair of decalico-maniac vases, but I wouldn't."

"I didn't take it to sell: I took it for a sail to make the boat go."

"Well, that is not so harmonious; but don't you do it again."

Ike promised her that he wouldn't, and went to school cheerfully, receiving ten checks during the day for his exemplary deportment. The ducking and the fright had a very beneficial effect on his health, and enabled him to take an active part in the Grum surprise-party, which took place soon after.

CHAPTER VI.

NEIGHBOR GRUM'S SURPRISE-PARTY. — BOYS ON THE GRASS. — GRUM A PRISONER. — AN IMPORTANT QUESTION.

THERE were great swimming-matches on the creek, in which rivalry ran, or swam, high. The whole of the Rivertown boys came to the creek to swim, where the water at high tide was warm and nice. The county road bridged the creek near its head, forming a large and deep pool; and here, safe from accidents and intrusion, they sported as free as air. Ike was a famous swimmer, and seldom found any one to excel him. One day after school a large party of Rivertown boys started for the creek to have a swim; and, when passing by Grum's place, they lingered a moment to look over the fence about the patch of green grass which he prized so highly and watched so carefully. He was at his window in an instant, as they expected he would be.

"Come, hurry along," said he: "don't stop here. Your room is better than your company."

"We aren't harming you," replied one.

"Well, clear out: you're not wanted here."

"Can't we play on your grass a little while?"

"No, you young scamp! Clear out."

"You needn't bite our heads off."

"My dog shall do the biting. Here, Towser, Towser! After 'em, Towser!"

They merely laughed at the cross old fellow, and passed on, when Sam Sides burst out with, —

"Let's give him a surprise-party when we go back."

"What do you mean?" cried several voices.

"Why, he called us scamps, and we'll wipe the insult out on his grass."

About all of them were ready for a lark, and shouted approval. So it was settled, that, when they went back, they would turn their jackets, swap hats, and pretend to be Indians, then jump over on the grass, and cut up all sorts of capers; planning more, however, than they could possibly carry out. They had thought it possible he might rush out on them suddenly: but Ike told them not to fear about that, — he'd fix it; and they went in swimming with this luxury in reserve.

Ike was a capital swimmer. Like the man out West, he could "dive deeper, stay under water longer, and come out dryer," than any other boy, — at least he said so; and, the tide in the creek being high, there was some fine swimming done, which rivalled the exploits of any frog that ever kicked. There were all sorts of trials, — trials with one another, trials against time, trials in floating, trials in treading water, trials in diving, until it was proposed to try who could stay under water the longest. This was eagerly accepted by all but Ike, who declared that he had had enough of it. He was all "blowed," he said, and didn't believe he could stay under any time at all. He gave in at last, very reluctantly, and then they prepared to dive.

There was a flat stone just under water, about three rods from the bridge; and it was agreed that the one who went farthest beyond this should be the champion — the "boss diver" — of Rivertown and the surrounding territory.

"You go first, Moody," was the cry; and Moody, taking a long breath to carry with him, and putting the palms of his hands together over his head as if to form a cutwater, plunged in.

The water was deep and turbid, rendering it impossible for any one to follow the track of the diver; and so the boys eagerly watched for the coming up of the submarine navigator. They had no watch by which to note the time he was under water; but Moody was a long-winded fellow, and staid under a good while. At last he arose, beyond the rock, blowing the salt water out of his mouth, and was received with a great shout.

One after another all tried it except Ike, none of them surpassing Moody for endurance or distance. Most fell far short of the flat stone, and none more than reached it. It was surely thought that Moody would be the champion, when Ike, the last one, was called upon to "go in and win." He was sitting upon the bridge, seeing the others, and, when called, responded at once, saying, —

"It's no use: Moody's won fast enough."

"You must try it," they all cried.

"But s'pose I should hit bottom, and knock a hole through, and go down to China or somewhere: what'd you do then?"

"Have you sent back by telegraph," replied Sides.

"Well, I'll try; but if I'm drowned you must excuse me to Mr. Grum, who'll be disappointed if I am not at his surprise-party."

"Go it, Ike!" they all shouted.

He mounted the railing of the bridge, which the others had not done, and there went through the same motions as the rest, elevating his hands above his head with the palms brought together, and plunged swiftly into the water. The water closed over him, and all that was to be seen were a few bubbles where he had disappeared. They waited with the deepest interest to see where he would come up, because they knew he was the only one that could compete with Moody. Where was he? they asked among themselves as he failed to appear after being under water much longer than Moody; and when double Moody's time had passed, they began to be alarmed. Still he did not appear, and then they were in a panic of excitement. All were in the water now, swimming along the track he must have gone, in an effort to find him, but in vain.

"Run for Ham!" was the general cry.

One, with only his hat on, started off to call assistance, but came back to put on some more

clothes. Others still continued their search in the water. Some five minutes had now been spent, when Mr. Ham, who lived near the creek, was seen running, with an eel-spear and a coil of rope, as if he were going to harpoon the boy. The greatest excitement prevailed; and it was feared that Ike had indeed gone down to "China or somewhere," as he had said, when a voice was heard from under the bridge, saying, —

"Why don't you search here?"

A dozen boys were overboard in an instant; and there, coolly sitting in the shadow of the bridge, was the missing Ike, grinning as if he hadn't been giving them the greatest scare of their lives.

"How did you get in there?" they cried in astonishment and anger.

"Well," replied he, "when I dove down I knew that I couldn't beat Moody; and so I turned round under water, and swam under the bridge. Scared, weren't you?"

They told him that the next time he played such a game as that they would let him go to China, or anywhere, before they'd try as they had to save him; and Mr. Ham told him an original story of a boy who cried "Wolf" once too often,

and got eaten up for his deception, threatening him, if he ever did such a trick again, he'd bring a horsewhip instead of an eel-spear.

The boys talked it over; and, after a little growling, they decided that it was a big joke, but one too serious to be repeated very often. Then they took up their homeward march, to make the "surprise" visitation on the way. They were in high glee about it.

It was just on the edge of the evening when they reached the Corner, and paused a bit to make arrangements. Ike told them to wait there while he went forward to reconnoitre. He saw Mr. Grum, as usual, at his window, and passed by whistling, as if taking no notice of him; then he crept along in the shadow of the house, and placed a chip over the latch of the door which opened out upon the green. He then returned by a path across the field, to where the boys were waiting for him, and told them that he had pulled all the teeth out of Grum's dog Towser. They turned their jackets, and swapped hats, and were so completely disguised that they scarcely knew themselves, and felt certain that Grum wouldn't know them; and then moved on very still to give him the surprise.

There the surly old man sat, in his shirt-sleeves, not dreaming of what was awaiting him, when he was truly surprised to see a dozen boys on his green plat, turning summersets, playing circus,

rolling over on the grass, and yelling at the top of their lungs. He was so astonished that he could hardly move at first. But they saw him leave the window; and in a moment they heard him at the door, trying frantically to get out

The latch wouldn't move. He was a prisoner in his own house. He didn't seem to understand it at first, but struggled and bumped and pushed against the door, until they heard him leave for another door, and then thought it was time to quit. They retreated in good order, and Ike disappeared into his own door as innocent as a lamb.

Next day Grum made a great fuss about the affair. He knew, he said, that Ike was at the bottom of it, but couldn't prove it; and when he asked Ike if he knew any thing about it, all he could tell him was that he saw a lot of fellows get over the fence, and heard 'em holler, and waited to see Mr. Grum jump out of his door and catch 'em, and wondered why he didn't! Mrs. Partington had marvelled why Isaac's jacket was inside out; but, remembering how Grum had served her when she applied to him for help, she said nothing. "We are not stocks and stones;" and even Mrs. Partington may have felt enough of the common emotion of humanity to be a little exultant about it, but it is not safe to say so. Grum then went to the school, and complained to the teacher, who promised all of them a good rattaning if they would confess; but they strangely refused, and

then he gave them a serious lecture, in Grum's presence, on the respect that the young should pay the old. When he had finished, Sim Walters, one of the best boys in the school, held up his hand.

"Well, Walters, what is it?" asked the teacher.

"Please, sir, may I ask a question?"

"Yes."

"If a man wishes to be respected, ought he not to be respectable?"

"That is, indeed, a question. What should you say, Mr. Grum?"

Mr. Grum went out suddenly, like a Roman candle, firmly convinced that every boy in that school was a candidate for the gallows or the penitentiary.

A hint at a moral may be put in here very briefly, instead of at the end, regarding a boy's respect for superiors. The question put by the boy gives the condition of the boyish mind. He has no superiors really, and certainly has no respect for what is mean. He feels that he is as good, as wise, and respectable, as any one; and he acts upon the Golden Rule, as he understands it, of

treating others pretty much as they treat him. He doesn't analyze very keenly: that is matter for after time and education. He grows into moral wisdom as he grows into his mature clothes; but while he is a boy he cannot be any thing else. Affections, morals, duties, have not hardened into purpose yet; but they are silently taking form to be revealed in the "sweet by and by."

CHAPTER VII.

DR. SPOONER AT CLAM CORNER. — SUNDAY MORNING. — IKE SURPRISED. — A BALD HEAD DECEPTIVE. — VISIT ABRUPTLY CONCLUDED.

THE promise which Dr. Spooner had made at parting from her, to visit Mrs. Partington during the summer, had not been forgotten; and so when she received a line from him, stating that he would come and spend the next Sunday with her, she was filled with pleasant anticipations. The note was conned again and again, and she forthwith busied herself to make his visit agreeable. The best room immediately went through a process of airing; and Ike was directed to procure some pine-boughs from the woods, with such wild flowers as he could gather, to render it agreeable to the refined taste of the doctor. Therefore from above the colored wood engraving of the "Prodigal Son," and the black profile of Corporal Paul, waved sweet-smelling offerings of welcome, and

the old-fashioned fireplace seemed almost suffocated with a plethora of green branches, with golden-rod and mullein blossoms in between, which made the apartment very cheerful.

On the Saturday after the receipt of his letter, the doctor came in on the afternoon stage, which rattled through the quiet settlement of Clam Corner, making a great sensation, and saying to all the people, who were out to see it, "Here we are!" with as self-satisfied a manner as any stage-coach could present. The doctor was landed at Mrs. Partington's door, with a huge trunk, a jointed fish-pole, and a gun-case, which denoted intentions to remain for some time; and was received in a manner according well with the good dame's reputation for hospitality.

"I'm shore I am glad to see you," said she, shaking him warmly by the hand, while her spectacles beamed with kindly emotion. "I'm glad to see you, because you are one of the kind that come very seldom, and stay but a little while."

"I am very happy to greet you," responded the doctor. "And how is your health and that of the boy? — any better for the change?"

"Much better, thank you. I have not had the

embargo in my back since I have been here, and Isaac never now complains of illness except when he is sick. Here he is."

Ike came in with a grin on his face, and Dr. Spooner shook him by the hand, saying some pleasant words to him; after which he went out again, leaving the doctor and Mrs. Partington to talk over matters of interest which had transpired at her old home since she left, and a very interesting season was enjoyed. Their conversation was interrupted by the report of a gun; and a cat, wild with excitement, dashed by the window at which they were sitting. Looking out, they saw the head of Ike rise slowly above a huge rhubarb-plant, as if looking for something, and then disappear, a slight vapor or smoke hanging over the place he had occupied.

Mrs. Partington glanced at the doctor; and the doctor, very red in the face, glanced at Mrs. Partington, and then went out in the direction of the head he had seen. The head, however, had disappeared; and the doctor looked in many directions to discover the lad, returning to the house soon after. He saw his gun-case behind the door, where he had left it, but did not open it; and, when Ike came in, Mrs. Partington said, —

"Isaac, did you hear that gun?"

"Yes'm."

"Who fired it?"

"Guess 'twas somebody firing at a cat."

Dr. Spooner looked at him steadily over his glasses, but expressed no opinion; while Mrs. Partington, thinking of nothing in particular, tapped her snuff-box in silence. Ike was a well-mannered boy, and sat down, saying nothing, but how much he thought of that fishing-rod and gun standing out there behind the entry-door!

When Dr. Spooner retired to his room, which Mrs. Partington trusted might be "congealing" to his taste, and had bid him good-night, he took the gun from its case, which he had carried up with him; and there was evidence of burnt powder about the nipple, from which he drew his own conclusions. His sleep was not very refreshing. The heat was great, the strange location worried him; and his first nap was broken by a dream that it was the Fourth of July, and that Ike stood by his ear blowing a villanous fish-horn, when, starting up, he heard a dozen mosquitoes in full blast, which had been holding a banquet upon his face as he slept. He worried through the night, however;

and at early daylight he got up softly, and went out for a walk, and a bath in the creek. The doctor was bald as a plate, though few suspected it; and, putting his wig in his coat-pocket, he was refreshed by the morning air which drew through the port-holes of his perforated straw hat.

There was a fringe of willow-trees by the side of the creek at Sherburn's Wharf, a little distance beyond the Partington residence, a cool retreat in summer; and here, where a good opportunity for bathing presented itself, secluded from prying eyes, the doctor returned for a quiet swim, after a mile walk on the road which led out to the woods. It was Sunday morning, and he knew that he should be free from intrusion: therefore, after a few moments rest, he prepared for his plunge.

As ill luck would have it, that very morning Ike had also arisen quite early to drive a cow to pasture, as an accommodation to a friend; and, having secured his four-footed charge inside of the "bars," he started to return home. He was not in much of a hurry. There were chipmunks running along the stone walls which he was bound to stone, a mud-turtle to catch in a wayside puddle, and raspberries tempting him on every hand,

until his returning steps brought him to the vicinity of the willows, where he heard the water splashing furiously, as though a leviathan were sporting there.

Ike crept along softly until he found a place where he could look through the leaves without being seen, and beheld the doctor's head, divested of his wig, which shone in the sun like a geo-

graphical globe, greatly exciting his curiosity. The bald head deceived him, and he failed to know his guest as he swam around there bare-headed. The tide was up, the water clear and cool, and the doctor, being a good swimmer, was enjoying himself hugely, when a small pebble chucked into the water not far from him. He did not mind it, but kept on swimming, when another chucked into the water, which he likewise failed to note, enjoying himself as he was. A brief time elapsed, when another pebble, better directed, alighted on the top of the doctor's dome, and brought his swimming to a close. He put his hand upon his head, and shouted, "HI, THERE!" feeling, as it seemed, a little hurt in his feelings.

Ike recognized the voice, and started in great haste across the fields, towards home, where he soon arrived, and sat down with the most undisturbed composure to await the doctor's return. He was a little anxious to see what would come of it, but had no twinges of conscience; for he justifield what he had done on the ground that he didn't know the doctor without his wig, and his hurry to leave was not from a consciousness of guilt, but merely from a desire to get away without being seen.

The doctor came in soon after, his face wearing a troubled expression; and Mrs. Partington smilingly asked if he had been taking his "morning oblations" in the creek. He told her that he had, and had found them the most striking of any which he had ever experienced. He looked at Ike as he spoke, who was at that instant gazing curiously at the wig, with a half smile around his mouth. The doctor was rather sensitive regarding his wig; and, fearing lest a severe inquiry about the pebble might lead to revelations he did not choose to make, he said no more upon the subject.

The next morning at breakfast the doctor told Mrs. Partington that he should be compelled to leave her hospitable roof immediately, as he was on a scientific errand, and should have to tear himself away. She was very much surprised, and tried to change his purpose, but he was firm as bricks.

"What is calling you away?" she asked.

"Why you see, madam, we physicians are always studying how we can best serve human needs; and, as vaccine-matter is very scarce now, I am going down to the seashore to obtain, if possible, some of the virus of a sea-cow for the purposes of our profession."

"Well, I am sorry to have you go, but hope you have enjoyed yourself."

"Most decidedly, madam: but there are some kinds of enjoyment that are better through anticipation, and some through memory, than the experience itself; and this has been one of the latter description."

"I am very glad to hear it, and hope you will never forget your visit to the Corner."

"Depend upon it, I never shall."

The doctor bade her farewell, and departed, with his gun-case on his shoulder and his fishing-rod for a cane; and when arrived at the hotel in Rivertown, he sent a carriage for his trunk, and booked his name for a week. He thought, that, by pursuing this indignant course, the boy might be led to repent of the wrong done him, and suffer the stings of an accusing conscience. In the same spirit we have seen a man cut down a favorite tree or vine, which the boys had robbed the year previous, that the offenders might blush with shame at the havoc of which they had been the cause; but did anybody ever know of an instance where remorse or shame followed the act of cutting down a tree under the circumstances named?

Ike *was* sorry, nevertheless, as he sat and thought about the doctor's "going off mad." A deep and sincere feeling of regret pervaded his mind as he recalled the fishing-pole, and remembered that he had not, in the brief time, had a chance to use it.

CHAPTER VIII.

IKE AND SIM AT THE FARM. — THE DROWNED WOODCHUCK. — THE HORNET'S NEST. — UNCLE TRACY IN TROUBLE.

SIM WALTERS had an uncle that lived a few miles up the big river; and Sim had invited Ike to spend a week with him at his uncle Tracy's farm in haying-time, assuring him a hearty welcome, especially from his aunt Martha and cousin Bill. Mrs. Partington was unwilling that he should go among strangers on such an invitation as this; and Sim wrote to his aunt Martha to know if it would be agreeable to have them come. The answer being very favorable, the boys, shortly after vacation began, went on their visit.

The farm was near the river, and they went by a packet which carried freight from Rivertown to places on the stream.

They found Bill waiting for them at the land-

ing. He was very glad to see them, and escorted them up to the house. Uncle Tracy was out in the field; but Aunt Martha received them very kindly, and said she hoped they would enjoy themselves. They said they thought they should; and, after eating a half-dozen doughnuts and drinking a pint of milk apiece, they walked out to look over the place.

The house was an old-fashioned weather-stained affair, large and comfortable, with a green lawn in front of it, shaded by grand elm-trees. This was enclosed by a fence; and outside of the fence was the barnyard, where the turkeys and fowls ran about with great freedom. One large white rooster attracted Ike's attention; but the bird seemed suspicious of the stranger, and would have nothing to do with him. He strutted off with lordly pride when advances were made to him, and called all the hens around him as if to tell them to look out for that little chap under the straw hat. There were portly pigs in their pens, looking fat and comfortable, and multitudes of geese and ducks, that flocked noisily around a trough in the corner of the yard, where a tall well-sweep was used to draw water with.

Ike had never seen a well of this kind before, and he looked at it with much curiosity. The "sweep" was a long and heavy pole, suspended at the middle from the top of a tall crotched post, the well-pole hanging from the small end of it, which was up in the air, the other end having a weight attached to it which bore it down to the ground. He looked into the well, and saw the empty bucket hanging there close by the top. Sim knew all about it, but thought he would let Ike find out how it worked for himself. Ike knew that somehow the pole was made to draw up the water, but he did not see into it at once; so he went to the part which had the weight on it, and tried to make it work that way by lifting it up. This he saw wouldn't do at all, and Sim clapped his hands for fun to see him try. Ike then took hold of the pole, and tried to pull it down. It came down readily: the bucket went into the well as the heavy end of the sweep rose into the air; and in a few moments Ike drew up a bucket of cool water, shouting his triumph, and slopping some of the water over Sim. Bill came along just then; and Sim told him how Ike had tried to draw water by lifting the heavy end of

the sweep, and they both laughed. But Ike bore it good-naturedly; and then Uncle Tracy came into the yard, looking very seedy and very tired, said, "How d'e do?" to Ike and Sim, and went into the house. The boys soon followed him; and such a nice supper as Aunt Martha had prepared for them Ike thought he had never tasted. After this Bill and the boys went out to milking; that is, Bill milked while Sim and Ike sat on the cow-yard fence, and Ike made friends with the cow by holding out to her a handful of grass which she reached out to take, and came nigh tipping the pail over by doing so.

They all went to bed early, and Ike and Sim slept together. They did not wake up till late the next morning, and heard Bill, away down in the field, driving some cattle out of the corn. The robins were singing in the trees; and the white crower, on a cart before their window, gave a crow which seemed to say, "Who-the-plague-are-you?" They could see from their window for miles up and down the river. The morning sun was shining brightly, and fishermen were already out in their boats trying for fish.

"I forgot to bring some fishing-lines," said Ike.

"No matter: Bill's got lots of 'em," responded Sim. "See there! that man in the boat is pulling one in."

Sure enough, he drew in what seemed to be a fine large fish; and the boys watched him with intense interest, seeing him catch several.

"My gracious! wouldn't I like to be there!" cried Ike.

"Well," said Sim, "we shall have chance enough to try it; but we must try a little farming first. 'Tis jolly, haying, you bet."

So they went down stairs, where Aunt Martha had a fine breakfast waiting for them, and who told them that Uncle Tracy and Bill had eaten theirs, and had gone down to the mowing-field long before. They felt ashamed of being so late, and said they would get up as early as Bill did while they were there. They were going to be real farmers, they said, and make hay, and hoe corn, and do every thing that the others did. But people are very apt to promise more than they are likely to perform; and the resolution of two small boys at the breakfast-table, in broad sunlight, was different from that of the same boys next day, when called by Bill at the dawning, and

told to get up and milk the turkeys, and drive the hens to pasture. It was pretty hard to get up before it was light enough to see the beauty of a farmer's life, and so they failed to "see it;" but they dressed themselves, and were proud to hear Uncle Tracy say they were "smart boys." Ike shivered in the morning air; and, when Bill laughed at him, he sung, —

"To plough and to sow, and to reap and to mow,
And to be a farmer's boy, oy, oy,
And to be a farmer's boy."

"Bully for you!" cried Bill; and Uncle Tracy quietly laughed as Ike took up a stone, and threw it at a little chipmunk that sat on the wall.

And very good farmers the boys made for a day or two. They drove the horses in the horse-rakes, raked after the load, pitched on the hay, and deemed that it was really fine fun; but the thought would come up that there were thousands of fish waiting out there in the river to be caught, and that all this time was fruitlessly spent: therefore it grew irksome, and they were not so chipper as they had been.

On the third day, right in the midst of making

a load of hay, they saw a woodchuck making for his hole; and both of the boys dropped their forks, and ran for him. Of course he had disappeared before they reached him, but they knew he was there. Rover, an old dog belonging to one of the haymakers, also took an interest in the animal, and began to paw away the dirt at the mouth of the hole; but the boys drove him aside, and began a noisy debate as to how they should get the woodchuck out. Sim was for digging down to him; but Ike's suggestion to drown him out, yelled in a louder key, was adopted.

But what should they bring water in from the spring down in the valley? Lucky thought! There was a large tin pail over in the shadow of the wall, in which the men had brought some "switchel," — a drink made of water, molasses, ginger, and a little old cider-vinegar; and they would get this for the purpose. There was some left when Ike went for it; and, in the haste and excitement of the moment, he drank what he could, and spilled the rest on the ground, making off with the pail. The spring was several rods away; and, hurrying to it, they filled the first pail, leaving Rover to watch the animal. Up they came

with the water, and dashed it into the hole, expecting him to come out; but he didn't come worth a cent. Then they went for more water, which they dashed into the hole as before; but still he didn't budge. Rover had grown very unconcerned, and

lay there with his head on his paws, and his eyes half shut, except as a little of the water fell on him, when he moved to a greater distance. Bucket after bucket of water did they bring to drown out the woodchuck, but he made no sign.

"Guess he's got a life-preserver on," said Ike.

"All Rapid River couldn't drown him," echoed Sim.

They were vexed enough when they found that they had had all their "labor for their pains;" and probably at that very moment the woodchuck was away, by the back-door of his house, high and dry, and laughing, as perhaps a woodchuck can, at their effort to drown him out. Rover could have told them better how to manage it.

They replaced the pail, leaving the men to wonder at the sudden evaporation of the "switchel;" and then, taking their forks, they commenced to help turn over the hay. The two boys kept together; and, nearing a little clump of trees, they saw a hornet's nest, as big as a hat, near the ground in a small bush.

"Hallo!" cried Ike, "see there!"

"I see it; real yellow-jackets," said Sim.

"What's to be done?"

"Stick a fork into it, and push for the bushes."

Sim led the way on the retreat; and Ike, after seeing the course clear to run, stuck his fork into the nest, leaving it there; and out the hornets poured by hundreds. He plunged with Sim into

the thick bush, and they saw the enraged insects flying over them, and round about them, as if they suspected the boys were hidden there; but none came in to find out, and after a while they all went back, probably to see what damage had been done to their home; and the boys came out, and went up to where they were making up the last load for the barn.

"You go on with the load, boys," said Uncle Tracy, "and I will pick up the tools."

"There's a fork a little way down in the field there," said Ike, — "down there by that little bunch of trees."

"I see it; all right," and Uncle Tracy went in that direction.

The load driven by one of the hired men, with Bill and Sim and Ike on top, had reached a little hill that overlooked the field, when they saw Uncle Tracy cutting frantic capers all alone by himself. He brandished a fork in one hand, and his hat in the other, swinging them round like the sails to a windmill. He would run a few steps, and stop, going through the motion of brandishing the fork and hat, till at last he threw away the fork, and ran for dear life, swinging

round his hat like a crazy politician on election-night. At last he stopped. Soon after he came plodding after the team, with his face red from heat or anger; and, in reply to the questions which they anxiously asked as to what was the matter, he merely said, —

"Hornets, confound 'em!"

"Where are the tools, father?" asked Bill.

"Oh! I thought I'd let 'em stay: we shall want 'em again to-morrow."

"Did the hornets bite?" asked Ike.

"Well, they would if I'd ha' let 'em; and I wish they'd ha' tried their teeth on the one that left that fork in the hornets' nest."

Ike made no more remark, to avoid unpleasantness: but when they got home they found that Uncle Tracy's nose had swelled up as big as a rutabaga, a hornet having stung him there; and he looked just like a member of the Antiques and Horribles which Ike had seen the last summer, as he told Sim in a whisper. Of course Ike was very sorry that he had got the good man into such trouble; but how could he know that the hornets were so unreasonable as to attack one who hadn't harmed them? though he said nothing about it.

CHAPTER IX.

GOING FISHING. — COMMODORE HUNTRESS. — THE COMMODORE ON DEEP-WATER FISHING. — "GAFT HIM, WILLIAM." — IKE CAUGHT BY A FISH-HOOK. — WORK OF HIGH ART. — PATRIOTIC ROOSTER. — IKE AT THE CHURN-DASHER. — UNCLE TRACY SON-STRUCK.

THE next day was lowery, with fine rain, and Bill said they would all go fishing. Ike and Sim received the information with great joy, dancing up and down, and slapping each other on the back.

"Where are your lines?"

"What are you going to do for bait?"

"Where's the boat?"

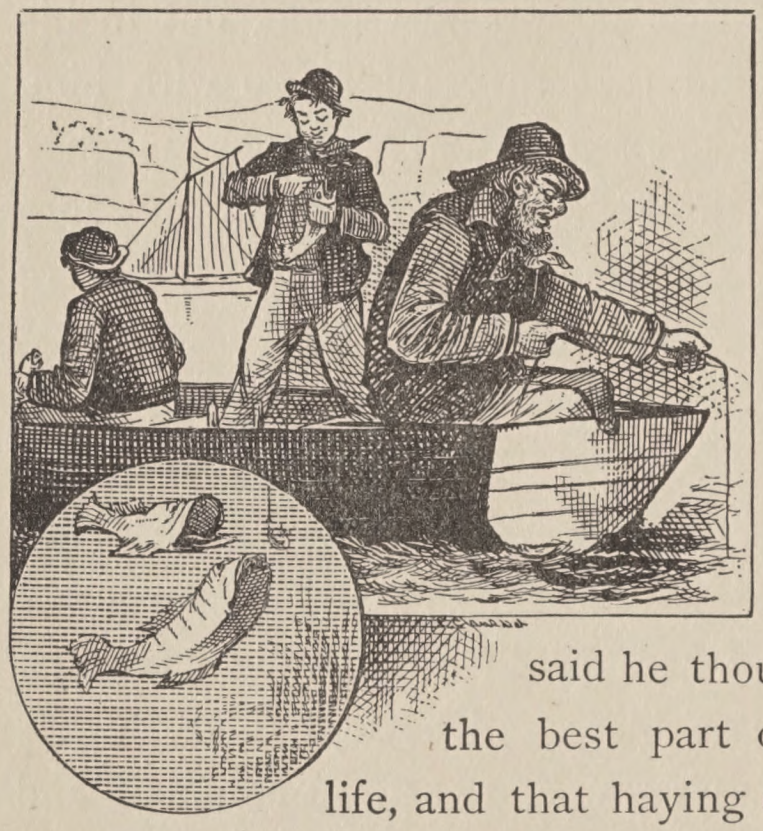
These were the questions asked; and Bill soon appeared with a basket and some lines, telling them the basket was for the clams which they were to dig down by the shore; and the boat they would have to borrow from Commodore Huntress,

below the bank at the landing. Taking their hoes to dig with, they went to the shore, which, it being low tide, was bare, and they soon dug plenty of clams for bait. They then went to the landing, where they saw the bluff old commodore, who told them that he was just going out in his boat himself, and that they might go with him. This pleased them exactly; and soon they launched the boat, which the commodore rowed out into the stream to a place where he knew there were millions of fish.

He called this place his garden, and the whole river was his farm. He took his early perch, he said, from the bed on which they were then about to fish (speaking of them as if they were early pease); there was a patch of splendid cod when the season was colder; and beyond them, farther in shore, he had a crop of the finest flounders and eels that ever were raised.

They baited their hooks, and threw over their lines, after they had dropped anchor; and they did not have to wait a minute before the fish began to bite. Ike was in excellent luck, and caught the first fish, — a large perch, — whereat he was much delighted, the commodore saying that he had

never seen a fish "pulled in handsomer." The others had bites; but the fish took their bait off, and Ike had four in the boat before either of the others had caught one. Then they all took them in pretty fast, and were highly excited by the sport.



The day was just right for fishing, and they had caught almost a basket-full before they knew it. Ike said he thought this was the best part of a farmer's life, and that haying couldn't hold a candle to it.

"This is nothing to deep-sea fishing," said the commodore.

"You've done lots of that!" responded Bill.

"Guess I have!" continued the ancient mariner, looking very knowing.

"Tell us about it," cried Ike and Sim in a breath.

"You should have been with me," he said, "one night off Ragged Ledge, where my brother William and I went to fish for hake."

"By night?" queried Sim.

"Yes: night's the time to catch hake; they are your reg'lar night tramps. Well, we had pretty good luck, and had caught about as many as we wanted, when, as I jerked my line at a bite, I found I had got something on about as heavy as an ox. Gracious, how it pulled! I knowed it couldn't be a hake, of course; but what it was puzzled me. Says I, 'William, I've got a whopper on here, and that's a fact.' I didn't ask him to help me pull him in; for I wasn't going to be beat by any fish that floated, 'less it might be a whale, and so I pulled away. Whatever it was, it jerked the boat round as if 'twere paper, and I didn't know but it might capsize us; but I held on and pulled, the line cutting into my hands like a knife. I found, after a while, 'twas growing weaker, and soon I got it on top of the water. There's a revolving light on the ledge, and just then the light turned round, and flashed on the water, so 't I could see what I had on to my line; but I couldn't make head nor tail of it. Leastwise I

couldn't make any head of it; and, when the light went, I was jest as much in the dark as I was when the fish was at the bottom of the sea. Then, says I, seein't I couldn't get it in alone, 'William, bring a gaft.' So he brought the gaft, and tried to hook the critter by the gills, but there didn't seem to be no gills. Says I, 'Good gracious, William! why don't you gaft him?' Then William says, says he, 'I can't find no place to hitch on to.' But he giv' a quick jerk, and had him. We pulled him in. That's the biggest that's been caught yet," said he, diverted from his big fish-story as Ike drew a pound perch into the boat. "That's a reg'lar sockdolager."

"But what about the fish you was catching?" said Sim.

"Oh, yes! well, William got the gaft hold of the critter, and we pulled him in, — as much as we could do, though, — and found 'twas a halibut that weighed two hundred pounds, hooked right through the tail!"

There was a sharp cry of pain from Ike, who, as if showing his appreciation of the point of the commodore's story, had forced the point of a perch-hook right into the thick part of his thumb.

He was caught completely, and could not get the hook out. He made a good deal more fuss about it than the poor fish did that he had just pulled in; and Sim unfeelingly said that he now knew how it was himself. But the commodore comforted him by telling him he would take it out when he got on shore, and congratulated him that it had not been a halibut-hook. He cut the line close to the hook; and then, Bill and Sim having pulled up the anchor, he rowed the boat ashore.

"Now, boys," said the commodore, rummaging in an old chest, and taking out a pair of cutting nippers, "I'll show you how to take a hook out, in case any of ye ever get caught so again."

"Will it hurt?" said Ike.

"P'raps it may a little," replied the commodore; "but that'll be better'n allers carryin' a hook round with you, won't it?"

After a little shiver of fear, the thumb was held out, when the salt-water surgeon cut off the top of the hook with his nippers, and then, holding the thumb so very hard in his grip that he fairly benumbed it, he forced the barb through the flesh, and drew it out. The pain lasted but a moment, the blood flowed a little, and the boy was happy.

"There," said the commodore, "that's the way to do it; and every boy that goes a-fishing should know how to manage in sich a 'mergency."

Ike thanked him; but the thumb was sore, and he allowed the other boys to divide the fish with the old fisherman, while he went on before to the house, to enlist the sympathy of Aunt Martha, which was fully given him, with a poultice of white bread and milk to keep out the inflammation.

Next day the finger was too sore to admit of his going out to engage in farming, and Sim remained at home to keep him company. Of course they could not confine themselves to the house, and so they went out to explore the barnyard and the outbuildings. Every box was opened, every nook, high and low, searched, with the spirit of curiosity which inspires the universal boy. Things long forgotten were brought to light; and from a box in the corn-chamber was taken some red and blue coloring matter with which Uncle Tracy had in former years marked his sheep. It was a powder; and, on mixing it with water, the boys found that it made a very good paint. After experimenting with both kinds, upon wheels and cart-bodies, barn-doors and fences, a happy thought struck Ike.

"Let's paint the old crower," he said.

"Done," responded Sim, laughing at the idea.

The old cock was pacing grandly up and down, looking at them suspiciously as they came to this conclusion; but, failing to guess precisely what they were driving at, he did not try to get out of the way, and in a moment was a prisoner. He made a fierce remonstrance, and his family of hens ran screaming away, as the boys carried him into the woodshed, where the paints were all ready for the artistic decoration.

"Shall we paint him all over?" said Sim.

"No," replied Ike: "we'll paint one wing red and the other blue, and make a Hail Columbia bird of him — red, white, and blue, you see."

"All right: go ahead."

"You paint one wing, and I will the other."

They went to work, and in a few minutes had produced the most singular and gorgeous barn-yard monarch that ever spread his feathers to the sun. With a white body, and red and blue wings, he seemed to be unconscious of his magnificent appearance, and strutted off to join his mates, who ran away from him, seeming not to know him in his new dress. Uncle Tracy, about this time com-

ing in from the field, saw the strange bird, and asked the grinning rogues where it came from; but when he found out about it he was much displeased. He told them that even a poor barnyard fowl had rights which they ought to respect, and they should not expose even an innocent and harmless cockerel, who had no ambition, to ridicule, by making him appear what he was not. Now, in his new dress, he said, he was like some politician drawn out to fill a station he was not fitted to fill, to strut a while as a laughing-stock, and then to disappear. That was an honest old fowl, and he did not like to see him so put upon. This rather dampened the fun of the thing, but the crower did not seem to be at all aware of his gay feathers; and next morning, when he was all alone, Uncle Tracy was heard to laugh very heartily as he saw the bird strut by.

This was Aunt Martha's churning morning, and she was very busy at the dasher; while Ike, who thought he would not go down to the field with Bill and Sim, because his hand was still sore, stood looking on to see her churn.

"As your other hand is not lame, dear," said Aunt Martha, "would you not like to take hold

and help bring my butter, while I go and do something else?"

Certainly, he thought he should like it; and so he took off his jacket, and went to work. It seemed easy enough at first, but his arm soon began to ache; and he thought that that butter was more reluctant to "come" than he had ever been when called. He worked away very diligently for about ten minutes, which seemed an hour, when he stopped to rest a little; and just then he saw a great black smoke rise up over the trees, followed by a blaze, which seemed but a little way off. He thought it was a barn on fire; and, without even putting on his jacket, he left the butter to come of its own accord, and started across the fields in the direction of the smoke, which proved farther away than he supposed, but he kept on to where he found an immense pile of brush burning in an open lot, by the river, which had been cleared off. Quite a number of people had collected about the fire; and Ike, excited by the scene, as every boy is by fire, forgot all about his churning. As soon, however, as he thought of it, he left, and ran back as fast as he could.

Aunt Martha had seen him run across the field;

and, knowing that he could not be back again for some time, she went out and renewed the churning, the butter coming very soon. She took it out of the churn, and left the buttermilk as it was, determining, with a sly humor, to play a harmless trick upon the deserter. Ike came back, puffing and blowing; and, after resting a moment, he took hold of the old dasher again, and went to work vigorously. The butter having been removed, it worked easier than it did before, and so he churned and churned, wondering if that butter ever would come. Bill and Sim came in from the field, and found him hard at it. Bill looked into the churn, and burst out laughing, as he said, —

"What are you 'bout?"

"Making the butter come."

"*Come!* why, the butter's *come* — and *gone.*"

Ike was not well pleased to find that he had been churning buttermilk; but he felt mean for deserting his post, and with a funny look at Aunt Martha, who smiled back at him, he let the matter drop.

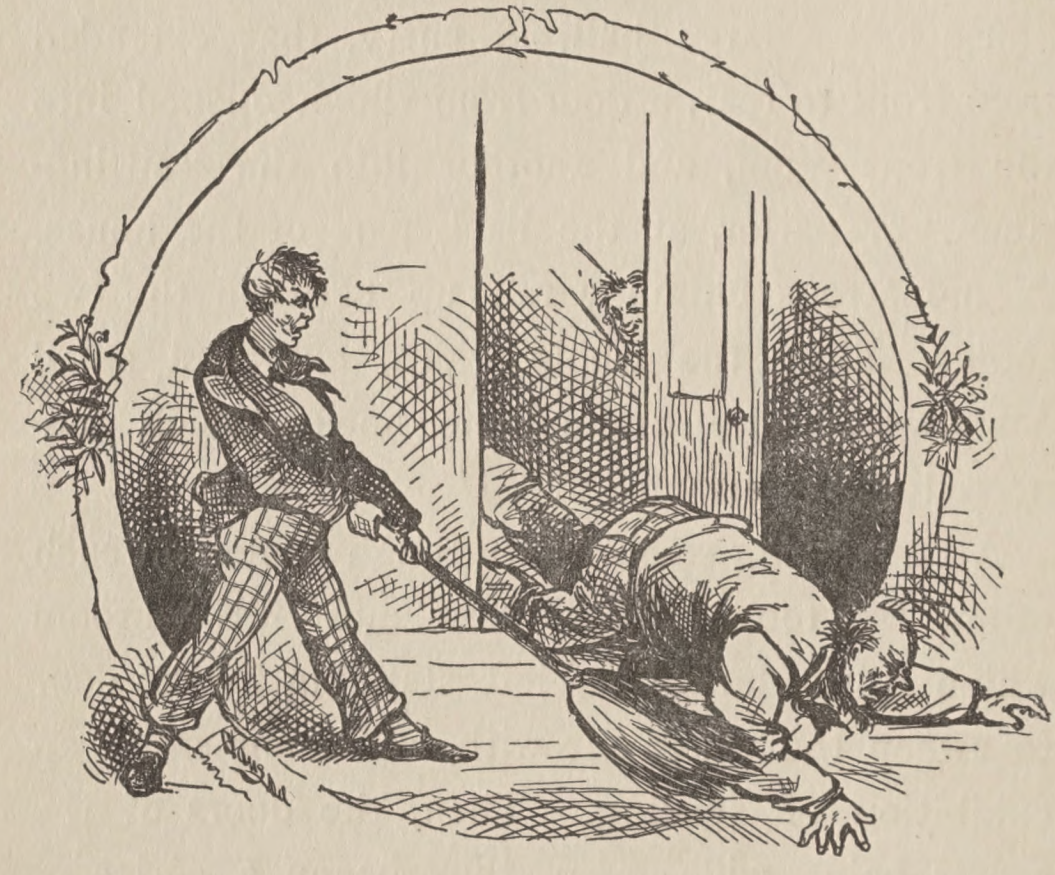
There came up a terrible rain one day; and, as there could be no working on the farm, all kept in the house. Uncle Tracy took his agricultural

paper, and went away to read it; Sim found a book that suited him; and Bill and Ike, after trying several expedients for amusing themselves, got 'sky-larking. Going on, little by little, they made things very lively, and drowned the noise of the rain and wind by their boisterous glee. The old house had a large hall, or entry, that extended from front to rear, a door from which opened into the front-room, and another into the "sitting-room," or parlor, at the back part of the house. A monstrous chimney ran up between the two rooms, filling the whole width, except a small entry-way, at the end of the house, which connected the two rooms.

After playing some pretty rough games on each other, Ike took a heavy cane, and Bill a broom which Aunt Martha had left standing by the door to sweep the water out with, and commenced an exhibition of fencing. Then, the doors of the rooms being wide open, they began a series of mutual attacks, — rough and tumble, the hardest fend off, — chasing one another round from room to room, each watching to get advantage of the other, during which they received some pretty hard knocks. The sport had become so fierce,

and the noise so violent, that Aunt Martha begged Uncle Tracy to go out and overawe the disturbers of the peace by moral power, but not to hurt them.

The door of Uncle Tracy's room was opposite



the one from which Ike was emerging; and, hearing the old man coming, he stopped, looking very demure, holding his weapon behind him. Uncle Tracy looked at him steadily and somewhat sternly; and Ike, holding up his hand, stepped

forward, pointing to the door of the front-room, saying, in a deep whisper, "In there!"

Uncle Tracy, without saying any thing, moved on softly, and thrust his head into the door where Bill was waiting, in ambush, to receive his adversary. In an instant the broom came down on Uncle Tracy's head with a whack, and he found himself sprawling across the entry. Aunt Martha ran out to pick him up, and for a few moments there was a scene.

Fortunately it was the broom part, saturated with water, that struck him; but for about a minute and a half he could not have told the name of the town he lived in, nor who was going to be the next president. Ike threw his cane aside, and stood by, with a very long face, listening to the lecture which Uncle Tracy gave Bill, part of which was directed at him.

"I thought it was Ike," said Bill in reply.

"Well, I didn't," replied Uncle Tracy, rubbing his head; and order was restored.

CHAPTER X.

HOMEWARD BOUND. — DRIFTING DOWN THE RIVER. — THE ANCIENT FISHERMAN. — BITES. — PULLING IN THE BLUEFISH. — AN INTERCEPTED LETTER. — CAPTAIN BOB ON TRUTH. — HIS SEALING-VOYAGE.

IKE and Sim had extended their visit to two weeks, and were ready to return by the same packet which had brought them up, which they were to signal to stop for them. The signal was set, and they bade everybody good-by; no one, however, being very urgent to have them stay but Bill, who, though a little older than they, had found them capital company. He went down to the landing with them, where they awaited the coming of the packet on the ebb tide. She was a good-sized vessel, with a latteen sail, to lower when she passed under the bridge before reaching Rivertown; and they saw her tall sail over the bushes as she approached.

In a few minutes, after bidding Bill good-by, they were on the packet, drifting down stream with the slack tide; for there was not a breath of air stirring. The way was long to Rivertown, and promised little of interest to the young voyagers. The river was very beautiful, bordered by deep woods and majestic rocks, whose dark shadows lay upon the waters; but they did not care much about such things. They would talk for a moment to people in boats, make signals to any one they might see on the shore, shout to hear their voices echo among the rocks; but boys are impatient, and so they were bored on board the packet. There was a little cabin in "The Sally Ann" (which was the vessel's name), and they went down into it to see what it was like. It was a little close place, with two small holes in the stern for cabin-windows, and a shelf each side, on which, if hard put to it, one or two might sleep. The boys stretched themselves on these shelves, and looked out dismally over the still water far behind.

There was an elderly passenger, who was also annoyed by the slow movement of the boat. He had grown tired of viewing the scenery, and thrown his magazine one side, and now asked the skipper

if he had a fishing-line on board. One of the men opened a little closet near at hand, and produced a line; and then, as there was no other bait, he brought a piece of fat pork to put on the hook. Thus provided, the gentleman threw over his line, the sinker on which being heavy, it sank quickly to the bottom, the tide keeping it in place. Then the fisher began the customary performance of pulling the line up and down, keeping the sinker a little way from the bottom, and poising it so that the least nibble might not escape him. There is nothing that pleases a lazy man so much as this kind of fishing — of course, if he catches any thing; and, when he is too old to carry a pole all day through bog and brier, it is just the kind to "taper off with," and brag about like an old Nimrod. So he fished.

"What's that?" said Sim in a whisper, as he saw the line drop into the water.

"Somebody's fishing, I guess," replied Ike, who had been about half asleep.

"He can't catch any thing."

"No, of course not."

"I don't believe he'll get a bite."

"Nor I."

After waiting a minute Ike said, "Say, Sim, s'pose we give him some bites?"

"How?" asked Sim.

"I'll show you."

Suiting the action to the word, Ike reached out of the little window, took hold of the line, and gave it a gentle twitch. Up went the line, hand over hand, very rapidly, and they heard a voice say, "'Twas a splendid bite."

"Bite him again, Ike, as soon as he gets his line down," said Sim, laughing at the fun of the thing.

"I'll give him a bigger one next time," said Ike.

Down went the line; and it was pulled up and down nervously for a minute, when, reaching out again, Ike gave it a smarter jerk. Again it was pulled in swiftly; and the boys were convulsed with laughter, but kept as still as they could so that they might not be heard.

"Didn't catch him that time," said Ike.

"I never had a more positive bite," they heard the fisher say. "It must have been a tautog: they always seem to shut their jaw right down on the bait."

The skipper did not think it could be a tautog, because none had ever been caught in the river;

but it might be some heavy cod which had come into the river to feed on the muscles at the old bridge farther up.

Down went the line again, and it was drawn up and down as before; but the boys waited fully five minutes before they touched it.

"Now, Ike, give him a halibut-bite," said Sim.

This time Ike gave a more determined pull, with the same result; when, thinking they had carried the joke far enough, they crept out on deck, where they found the fisherman in a state of great excitement, trying again for a bite, and disappointed that he could not get another one, declaring that he never had finer bites in his life. The boys chuckled to themselves, but said nothing.

The old gentleman at last discontinued trying, but left his line hanging over the stern. A breeze sprang up, the tide increased, and the packet moved swiftly, the line stretching far behind.

"Sim," said Ike in a low tone, "go down and get that old umbrella-frame we saw there."

Sim crept down, and soon returned with an umbrella, whereof little was left besides the sticks; to which, the line having been drawn in, Ike attached the hook near the ferule, that the frame

might not spread, and then threw it overboard. Having done this the boys walked away very unconcernedly to another part of the vessel.

The line ran out to its utmost length; and then a great commotion appeared in the water, as the umbrella was dashed from side to side and over and over as if by some large fish that was struggling to free itself. No real fish could have been more active; and one of the men, glancing towards it, cried, —

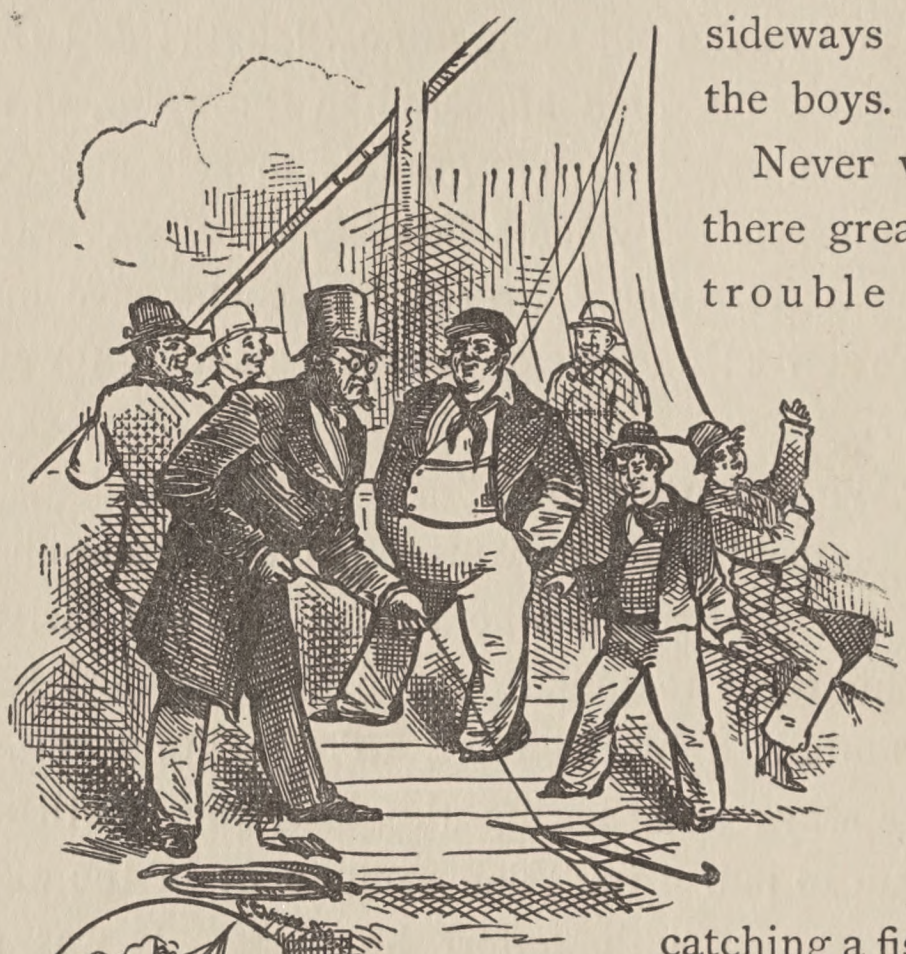
"What's on the line?"

The cry immediately attracted the attention of the old gentleman, who rushed aft, and insisted on his right to pull in the fish, as he had been so tantalized by the bites. The polite waterman gave way; and, seizing the line, the gentleman began to pull it in. The excitement in the water increased with the effort he made. It was undoubtedly a bluefish, he said, because he had caught hundreds of them in Buzzard's Bay, and knew one by the pull. The line slipped from his hands, the resistance was so great; and he eagerly began to pull in again. All on board were now watching the line.

"I guess it is a whale," said **Ike.**

"Or a shark," said Sim.

The skipper said nothing, but he looked funny round the corners of his mouth as he glanced sideways at the boys.



Never was there greater trouble in catching a fish: even Commodore Huntress, and his halibut hooked by the tail, were beaten by this that flashed and floundered out there in the water. The sunlight was in the eyes of those looking on, so that it was no wonder they could not make out what

it was. The old gentleman had nearly got it in, and giving a last effort he drew the sea-monster over the stern. Surprise and anger filled the ancient fisherman as he threw down the line, and walked away, laying all the blame to the one who first gave the alarm.

Somehow or other it leaked out before they reached Rivertown, that the boys did it, as well as what sort of fish it was that gave the bites; and, though the old gent felt vexed with them at first, he afterwards confessed to the skipper that they were "lively boys." And when he found out that one of them was Ike Partington, he *asked him for his autograph!*

Ike was warmly welcomed home by Mrs. Partington, who looked him over to see if he had come back whole, and then began a catalogue of questions as to what he had seen, how he had behaved, and how they had treated him.

"I hope you were a good boy," she said.

Ike assured her that his conduct had been irreproachable, for the proof of which she might ask Sim.

"Well, I'm glad to hear that you didn't do any thing to vindicate your good name; for people

judge a person's conduct by the way he behaves himself, and we are always happier when we have done nothing that our conscience acquits us of."

Ike said, "Yes 'm," as he navigated through a quarter section of custard-pie.

"And did you like farming?"

"Boss."

"What part did you like best?"

"Fishing."

"I hope you didn't go on the water to catch fish," said the dame anxiously.

"How could I catch 'em if I didn't?"

Mrs. Partington silently admitted the logical force of this question, looking at him over her glasses, and then turned his valise inside out to see if he had brought back all of his clothes. She shook every garment; and, as she served an old jacket thus, a paper dropped out of one of the pockets, which she picked up.

"What is that, Isaac?" she asked.

"My gracious!" replied he, "if that isn't Joe Moody's letter which I wrote him up to the farm. I put it in my pocket, and forgot to send it."

After rebuking him for his neglect to write to her, when he could find time to write to any one else, she opened the letter, and read, —

HILL-TOP, Augurst 5.

DEAR JO — I rite this on a bee hyve in a barn turned bottom up with lots of swallers flying round but you cant ketch em and I found three hens nests whitch was laid away in the hay whitch I shall try to find some more. I and Sim went for sum hornets down into the field and they stung Uncle Tracy on the nose wen we drownded out a woodchuck whitch we didnt becos he got away before we drownded him. You ort to see the crower that me and Sim painted red white and blew and we histed the cat up on the well sweape to tellegraff the boys over the river who histed up a pare of boots and a corn baskit which is fun though Uncle Tracy don't like it much. I'm going fishing tomorrer with Sim and Bill and tell the fellers that we are hunky dory also the old woman up the crick.

Yures always, IKE PARTINGTON.

"Who do you have reverence to by 'old woman'?" said Mrs. Partington, folding the note, and looking at him severely over her spectacles.

Ike was confused for a moment.

"I guess I was absent-minded when I wrote that," replied he; "I should have said 'lady,' of course. I had a bad pen, and couldn't think very straight."

"Well, be careful that you don't make such a mistake again, for to be disreputable to old people is not very credible in the young."

The first person that Ike called upon after getting home was Captain Bob, who shook hands with him cordially, as he had missed his little neighbor very much. Seeing a red mark on Ike's thumb: —

"What's the matter with it?" asked the captain.

"Got a fish-hook into it," replied Ike.

Ike told him then the whole story, how he got the hook in, and how he got it out, and about the commodore's halibut caught by the tail, whereby the captain was much interested.

"But, Lor' bless ye!" said he, "ketching *one* halibut by the tail is no great things. Now, what if I should tell you I had been in a boat where *two* had been caught by the tail, and that one of the crew stood up in the bow, and druv them halibuts, like a span, through the water, drawing the boat after 'em?"

"Of course that would be twice as wonderful," replied Ike with a grin.

"So 'twould," chuckled the captain, — "so 'twould: you're right, there, every time. But 'tisn't no use to say I didn't see it, for you wouldn't believe such a lie; and yet a lie that

nobody won't believe isn't so bad as one that comes so near the truth that it looks like it, and cheats us. Them's the lies that count. But this 'ere halibut story may be true; for, you see, there's mighty strange things happening all the time on salt water, as you know how it is yourself, being a shipwrecked sailor."

"I know you have lots of sea-stories," said Ike.

"Guess I have, my little chap, and true ones too. Huntress never went on a sealing-voyage."

"Sealing-voyage! What's that?"

"Why, to ketch seals like them in Barnum's show, only they are different. The ones I went fur were the fur seals that the gals wear on their shoulders, — away to the Falkland Islands, if you know where they be."

Ike said he had heard of them.

"Well, we went out there, clear to Cape Horn, in a little schooner called 'The Lovely Polly,' to ketch seals; and we had to kill 'em to ketch 'em. It did seem cruel for us to go so fur on purpose to kill the poor things that hadn't done us no harm, and looked at us so cur'ously from the rocks with their soft dark eyes. They didn't stop long to look, though, but rolled off into the water; and

'twas real tetching to see the seal mothers tumble their babies into the sea, and then follow 'em. We found 'em covering the rocks, hundreds of 'em, and every day killed more or less. The way we done it was to come upon 'em when they were sunning themselves, get right in their pathway to the sea, and then, when they ran by, knock 'em on the nose with a heavy club, one lick of which fixed 'em. It seemed cowardly like, and wicked; but we were there to make money, and men will do any thing for that. 'Tis better, though, let me tell you, to kill seals for money than it is to rob widows and orphans as too many do nowadays. One day we went ashore where we knew there must be lots of seals; but not a whisker did we see, high or low, 'cept one big seal that dodged somewhere as soon as he saw us. When we got up to where he was, we found the mouth of a cave; and, looking in, we could see lots of eyes glisten. It seemed as if the cave was full, and some one must go in to drive 'em out. It was a kind o' pokerish business, and nobody wanted to do it. I was young then, and full of spirit, and I asked the captain to let me go. He was a little doubtful about it; but, as nobody else would go, he said

that I might. I crawled into the cave; and, sure enough, there they were, hundreds of 'em. They jumped up with a growl when they saw me, and put for the opening. I couldn't stand up, the place was so low: so I sat there, and as they ran by I would tip them on the nose, and the ones outside drawed 'em out. I didn't move till I'd killed three hundred and forty-five of 'em."

"Weren't you tired?"

"N-no: I was 'cited like, and so didn't mind it."

"But how could so many get into so small a place?"

"Never you mind about that: so it was. When all of 'em was killed but one old sea-lion, I thought, boy-like, 'twould be fine sport to ride him out; and, when he came along, I jumped on to his back. I tell you he made the quickest time ever known in them parts; and, before I could say 'Jack Robinson,' I was overboard and that seal a mile under water."

"Why wasn't you drowned?" asked Ike, with surprise.

"Because my time hadn't come. Nobody can die before their time comes. I was picked up by the boat."

The captain, having finished his story, lay back with his sharp eyes fixed on Ike to read its effect on him. He evidently liked it, but he wondered to himself what it had to do with getting the hook out of his finger. With a promise to spin him some more sea-yarns at some other time, the captain went down to stop a leak in "The Jolly Robin;" and Ike went up into the field by the shore, to look after a bumble-bee's nest that he had discovered before he went away, and took a deep interest in.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WOOD-RANGERS. — THE OLD GUN AND THE CATS. — GROUND AND LOFTY TUMBLING. — IKE CRIPPLED BY A FALL.

ALTHOUGH the sports on the creek were delightful to the boys, it was equally pleasant for them to go out into the grand old woods which came down to within a mile of the town, and play the "ranger." Here were broad acres of forest and swamp, as new as if direct from the hand of the Creator, for their improvement; and well they improved them, in their way. Sylvan sports of all kinds were indulged in; each, by a free exercise of imagination, fancying himself a Robin Hood or a Little John, and not on a small scale either. Each one, provided with a hatchet, a knife, or a bow and arrow, was inspired to "blaze" every tree they passed, in imitation of the early settlers, or to shoot their shafts at the inoffensive birds and squirrels, which, however,

they seldom harmed, but always came "pretty near" hitting.

Who ever knew or heard of a boy killing a bird with his arrow, however bloody his intention? The genii of the woods considerately turn the bolts aside, or there would not be enough of the feathered songsters left for seed. Boys are more apt to harm themselves, as Ike was made to feel when he got the corner of Ephe Dennett's hatchet under the "pan-bone" of his left knee, which caused him to limp for a month or two afterwards.

They were great rangers, and their pleasant voices made music as they laughed and sung under the arches of the trees. One song was a favorite:—

"'Pray, who did kill that noble stag?'
'Twas I, 'twas I, 'twas I;
And I am called bold Robin Hood.'
'Bold Robin, you must die!'
Bold Robin then he blew his horn,
And soon his archers came:
They ducked the verderer in the pool,
And laughed to see his shame."

It wouldn't have been wholesome for any "verderer" to have come among them single-handed,

for he would probably have shared the fate of the one of the ballad; for there were plenty of pools for ducking purposes all round. Once they got a gun, which was a great innovation and a first-rate thing, for it afforded a delightful chance to blow their brains out, or inflict on themselves some other mortal injury. They took turns to fire, with the door of an old barn for a target, which they rarely hit, but came nigh killing the cattle in the field by the reckless way in which they fired with both eyes shut. The gun was Captain Bob's; and they got it of him when he was laboring under an excess of good-nature, and was sorry a moment afterwards that he let it *go off*. They returned it, however, without having blown off any of their limbs.

"If that gun had served you as it did me once, you'd never have wanted to borrow it," said he.

"Tell us about it," they cried.

"Well, one night as I was sleeping with my brother Ben in the attic of the old homestead, — a little one-story house, not much bigger than a martin-box, — there came a yowling of cats on the roof, as if they were holding a caucus up there. We were right under 'em, and could hear 'em

scratching, clawing, and spitting; and says I, 'Ben, you lay still, and I'll go out and fix 'em.' So I crept down stairs, and felt along to where this old gun was hanging. I had loaded her for ducks as much as six months before, and hung her up all primed for use; but the ducks hadn't happened along. I took her down from the hooks, and went out just as I came from bed, and the night was cold as Cicero. I didn't stop to think, because I was so chilly, but blazed away; and in half a minute I was kicked about six rods over across a fence into a snow-drift. I got back as soon as I could, you bet, and found Ben half scared into fits, because, he said, the shot had come right on to him. Next morning we found three dead cats in the cabbage-yard behind the house. That's the dientical gun."

They all looked at it and handled it with fresh interest, but the captain never loaned it to them again.

There was a place called "Beaver Dam," for some reason or other, which was famous as a place of resort for the boys; and the names of many generations of Rivertown boys were carved deep in the bark of an immense broad-breasted beech-tree. Ike's name soon found a place there in characters more bold than elegant, to be admired by coming ages. There were grand pasture oaks also in the vicinity, whose lower branches swept the ground; and walnut-trees, which accounted for the attraction of boys and squirrels in the fall of the year. Perhaps it was for their picturesque effect when the leaves were changing, and the whole forest of hard-wood trees was crowned with the glories of autumn. Whatever the reason, they were sure to visit Beaver Dam.

One fine warm October afternoon quite a crowd of the youngsters, having had their accustomed ramble through the woods, cutting "cat-tails," and hemlock boughs for bows, found their way to the "Dam," and were enjoying themselves splendidly, risking their necks by climbing the trees

as if they were squirrels and without any more fear. After a while Ike, jumping up and catching hold of a branch, cried out, —

"See here, Sam Hyte! I say, Tom Scates! Hallo, all of you! I'm going to show you some new gymnastics. I intend to join the circus next year."

"What are you going to do?" asked one.

"I'm up a tree, and I'm going to try some new ground and lofty tumbling."

"Take care you don't tumble in earnest."

"Look out and don't fall."

"You'd better give up your monkey-tricks, and come down."

Almost every one had something to say about it; and Ike gave up his intention of astonishing them, but came down upon a limb about twelve feet from the ground, and settled among the branches, half way out, his weight bending down the ends till the boys below could reach them.

"Now," said he, "take hold, and give us a swing."

"All right."

"Well, now all together!"

The limb, which was a pretty large one, moved

gracefully up and down, and swayed a little to the right and left, Ike nestling among the leaves, and urging those who had hold to toss him up higher.

"Now give a half dozen pulls for the last," he shouted.

They took hold now with a will, and threw all their strength into the effort, when, at about the fourth pull, they heard the limb split off from the trunk of the tree, and Ike rolled out of his cradle, falling head first upon the ground, like a paver's rammer. He put out his hands to break his fall; and when he got upon his feet, as soon as he was able to do so, he thought his wrists were broken. They swelled immediately, and were entirely useless. Here had been "ground and lofty tumbling" which they had not expected; but they said nothing, only to sympathize with the sufferer.

He was in a bad condition when he got home; and Mrs. Partington sent for Dr. Kittredge to come as "expediently as possible." He came, examined the hurts, and was thinking what to do, when Mrs. Partington asked, in a tone of deep anxiety, —

"Are the wrists desecrated, doctor?"

"No, nor dislocated."

"Is it a fraction of any bones, or sich?"

"No: merely a sprain."

"I'm so glad! I remember when my dear Paul — that is my husband — ran against the edge of an open door, in the dark, and broke the cartridge of his nose, and said he had no idea that his nose was longer than his arm before, how much he suffered from the confusion, with the skin upbraided, and his eye as black as my shoe."

"Nothing is broken, ma'am; and, with a little patience and some time, he will be out again as good as new."

"I'm glad to hear you speak so sanguinary, I declare."

The doctor left something for the patient, visited him several times, and sent in his bill, which was paid; but it was a long time before Ike was himself again. Mr. Grum was not afraid of him now. Whatever the scheme the boys had on foot, he could not have a hand in it. He began, however, to do things, little by little, — easy things at first, — the last, such as bringing wood and water, being pronounced impossible for a

long while; but at length he was "right as a trivet," whatever that may be, and ready to have a finger in any thing that was going on, even if it was a cart-load of apples.

CHAPTER XII.

AMUSING THE INVALID. — TRYING A CAT'S TEMPER. — THE OLD ANTEDILUVIAN. — QUEER STORIES. — THE FIGHT AT SHELDON'S. — MAKING UP.

WHILE Ike was shut up in the house with his sprained wrists, the restraint was terrible to him. He was not one of the studious kind of boys, who could sit and read and enjoy seclusion under the spell of a book. Even a spelling-book had no charm for him: so he would take his place by the window, and amuse himself with what was going on outside; but, as the place was very quiet, not much of interest occurred to please or excite him. The creek side of the house was more satisfactory, as he could overlook the stream, and watch the boats as they sailed by, — could see the people cross the bridge which dammed the creek at its outlet, and the huge flood-gates beneath it, which opened and shut with the rising and falling tide; but even this grew monotonous,

and he sighed for release. The boys would come as often as they could to cheer him, and turn summersets before the window, and run races, and all that; but it only reminded him of his own disability, and he was not happy. The boys were reduced to one on a Saturday afternoon, Mrs. Partington having gone out for a time, while little Nat Sides, a very sprightly fellow, remained in charge of the invalid.

He had exhausted all of his ingenuity in providing expedients for the amusement of the sufferer until he was about giving up, when he espied the cat sleeping serenely in a corner. The instinct for tormenting, which forever inspires the human boy, instantly lighted his eye, and spread his face with a glow of happiness.

"Let's have some fun with the cat," said he.

Ike, much interested, replied, "Yes. But what are you going to do?"

"Oh, you'll see! Is there a big bag here anywhere?"

"Look in the closet there."

Nat looked in; and there hung Mrs. Partington's rag-bag in which all the shreds were usually saved, but it was now nearly empty.

"That's your sort," said he.

He took the bag down from the nail where it hung, and, hitching it to the back of a chair, went to bring the cat. She was in that state betwixt sleeping and waking, when a cat's senses, like her claws, are sheathed; and she made no resistance. Nat took possession of her in this half-and-half condition; and before a glimmer of his wicked purpose could enter her mind, he had her in the bag with the string drawn closely around her neck. She was wide awake now, and made a fierce struggle to free herself, but in vain. She yowled and spit and kicked, her eyes flashing fire; but the boys only laughed.

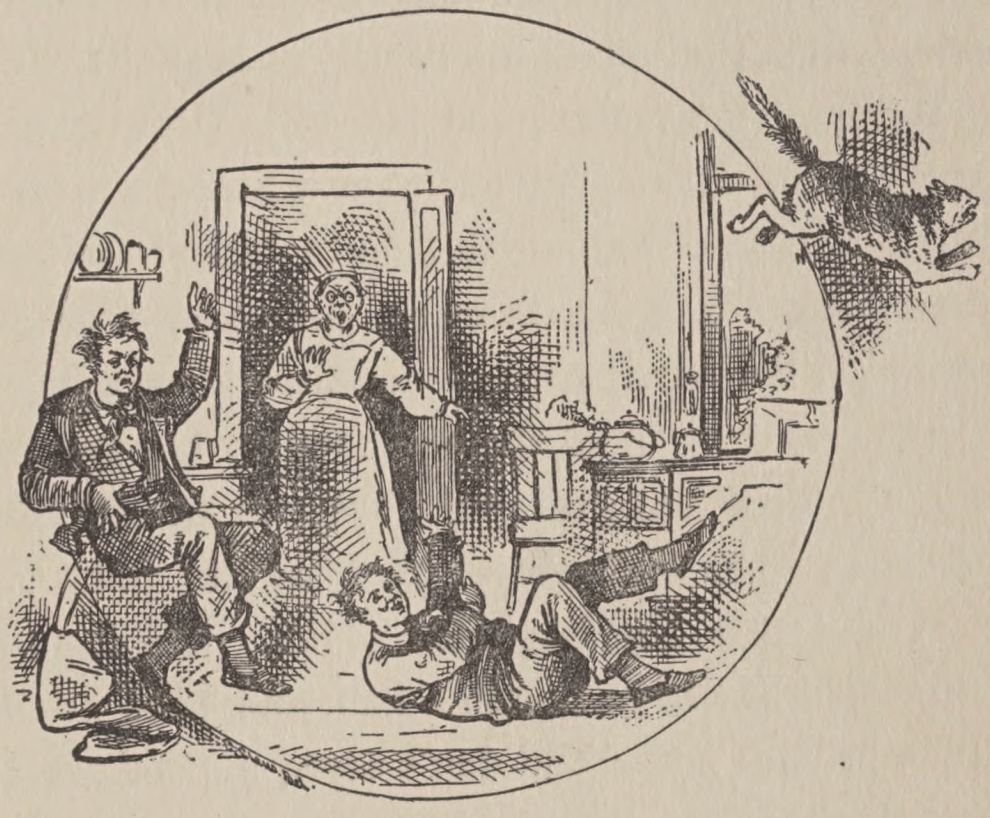
"Tickle her with a straw," said Ike.

"Yes," replied Nat.

Mrs. Partington's best broom reposed behind the door, from which a piece was taken; and then the experiment began which was to put to test the temper of the cat and the cruelty of the experimenters. They tickled her nose, and tried her at every exposed point. The poor creature, terrified and angry, remonstrated in her way, and showed, by the manner in which her claws revealed themselves through the cloth, that if she could only

get at them, she might have a chance to laugh, and they, perhaps, wouldn't.

Right in the midst of the scene, while the boys were at the height of their glee, the door opened, and Mrs. Partington entered. The noise ceased



at once, the cat looked appealingly to the dame, and she, with a flush of indignation, cried, —

"What are you doing, you imps of wickedness?"

"We aren't hurting her," explained Ike.

"We are only trying her temper," echoed Nat.

"Well, you extract her from that bag as quick as you can, or I shall harm *you* and try *your* temper."

She was very severe as she said this while taking off her gloves, and Nat proceeded to let the cat out of the bag. Coming too near her, however, without minding, his hand was brought within reach of her mouth, and she seized his thumb in her teeth, making him scream with pain. Mrs. Partington went to his relief, and released the cat, which made a dash through the open window, while the boy danced round the kitchen crying.

"There, dear," said she, softened by her sympathy, "you see that cats and boys can be simultaneous in their feelings. You tried her temperature, and now she has tried yours. Think how you would like to be put in a bag, and have sticks stuck in your nose; and don't serve a poor cat so pussylanimously again."

There were many who came in to see Ike during his trouble; and among these was old Mark Treddle, who had early got acquainted with him. Old Mark, who dearly loved boys, had led a melancholy life. His home was at the town jail, where he had been taken in his early years for a

terrible crime which he had committed while insane. The insanity was so plain that he had never been even brought to trial, but had been kept at the jail, where since he was perfectly harmless, he was not held in restraint, but went where he would. He was very ingenious with tools, and had tried to instruct Ike in the mysteries of the jacknife, by which he would produce windmills and kites that should defy competition. And then such stories as he would tell, coined from his own diseased fancy, — so wild and strange, with no regard to time or place, — mixing up the men and things of old with those of the present time! He knew, he said, the ones who figured in Bible story, and saw them every day. David, Nathan, Noah, Jeremiah, were his neighbors; and he himself beheld the downfall of the temple where Samson "brought down the house" when called to make sport for the Philistines.

He was very prompt in coming to see Ike, and often cheered him with some of his wonderful stories. Mrs. Partington, while admitting that these seemed a little confused, thought she saw a great deal of good sense in some of them.

"You know Jeremiah?" he said, abruptly addressing Mrs. Partington on one occasion.

"Jeremiah who?" she asked.

"Why, the prophet, — Jere Green."

"I know Jere Green, but had no idea he was prophetable."

"Yes. Well, it would have done you good to see him fix them soothsayers and false prophets. They couldn't hold a candle to Jere; and when he had made out the writing on the wall, he rolled up the biggest of 'em into a ball, and knocked the others down with it as if they'd been ninepins."

"You don't say so!" she exclaimed.

"Yes. Well, he told me of a cure for pain. A friend of his in Judee sprained his ankle, and got the rheumatism in it, when Jere told him he would cure it. So he got a large cannon, rammed his friend into it, and fired him off; and he went so far into the country that it took him three weeks to get back. He had to walk all the way, and never had any trouble afterwards."

"What a curious anecdote for pain!" said Mrs. Partington, smiling, and elevating her hands. Ike thought he wouldn't like to try it.

At another time, Mrs. Partington quoted David as saying something.

"Yes," said Mark, "and I heard him say it.

Poor old man! I pity him in his trouble about Absalom, who has been taken up for setting fire to a barn on Jerusalem Road. If the wood had been like that at Labrador," he continued, "it wouldn't have done any harm if he had set it."

"Isn't it inflammatory?" asked Mrs. Partington.

"Yes. Bless you! 'tis so cold there, and the wood is so frozen, that they have to soak it in cold water three days to thaw it out before it will burn, and then it has to be pounded with a sledge-hammer."

"Who is David?" asked Ike.

"David Rigby; and you ought to hear him play the jews-harp, and sing at the same time. He and the prophet Nathan don't quarrel so much as they did, and Tubal Cain has just put new handles to a pair of Bathsheba's flat-irons."

"How pleasant it is to know these old people, who lived so far back in antipathy!" said Mrs. Partington, humoring him.

"Yes; but they won't all allow that they are the ones. There's Noah, now, who lives up there by the creek, — Simms the blacksmith, — he won't own it, except when there comes a very high tide on the creek; and then he sings out for Ham to hurry up and get every thing snug into the ark."

"Did you know any thing about the Indian war?" said Ike.

"Yes. Know? why, Lord bless you, I was round, wasn't I? And when the Miller family was killed by the Indians, I helped bring 'em to."

"What! did you recussitate them?" asked Mrs. Partington.

"Yes; but it was a very difficult thing to do. We had to boil 'em, and then lay 'em away to cool before we could put 'em together."

"But didn't they suffer?" she queried.

"No: only one, who complained of a stiff neck because he had cooled off too quick."

The weariness of restraint was relieved, by this and other means, until Ike got well, and was permitted to take his place among the boys again, much to his and their satisfaction.

About that time Sheldon's big hog was killed, which caused a great sensation among the boys. The writer here trembles as he approaches the incident which he, as a faithful historian or delineator, must describe, but dreads; like one who seeks for something offensive in the dark, but shudders lest he find it. The fight at Sheldon's is so mixed up with the butchery of the hog, that

quite a bloody tinge is given to it. It was Siah Tibbetts, a full-grown man, with whiskers as big as a quart-bowl, who stirred up a muss betwixt Ike and Joe Moody. They were, up to that moment, two of the best friends in the world. When Ike came up to see the hog dressed, Tibbetts said, —

"Now say it to his face."

Joe laughed, and put his hands in his pockets.

"You darsn't say it," continued Siah.

"Say what?" said Ike, reddening.

"Well, if he don't choose to tell it, I don't see why I should; but if anybody said behind my back, that my aunt or mother wasn't better than she should be, I'd wop him."

"Did you say so?" said Ike, looking excited.

"P'raps he didn't say it in them very words; but some folks says as much by looks as they do by speech, and that's what's the matter with him."

Joe heard all this without replying; while Ike glared at him with the ferocity of an irate hen.

"It may be all right," continued Siah, "to say that if your aunt had been a man she would have been your uncle; but that's just as folks think."

Ike doubled up his fists as big as cent buns, and looked as mad as a March hare.

"Then, again, there may be no harm in one's saying that he hopes a fellow may be better than his grandmother: it depends upon the meaning that's put onto it, and 'f I was you I'd ask him what he meant."

There's no meaner thing under heaven than a man — or one who calls himself a man — who will wickedly set to quarrelling two boys that have always been friends. Poor Ike, too angry to think of the absurdity of what Siah had been saying, and of the unlikelihood of Joe's having made the remarks insinuated, had worked himself up to a very tempest of passion. He could not contain himself; and, stepping up to Joe, he said, —

"Did you say that about me?"

"Say what?" yelled Joe.

"I don't care what: have you been saying any thing?"

"I've said a good many things."

"Then you are a sneak."

"You are another."

Siah laughed, which made Ike almost howl, and Joe was stirred. Then they looked ugly at each other, and walked round and round with bent fists

and knitted brows, like two young crowers in a barn-yard watching for a chance to pitch in. They were so little used to it that they didn't know how to begin; but the miserable tempter, Siah, was a ready prompter.

"Put a chip on your hat, Ike, and dare him to knock it off," said he.

Ike picked up a chip, and placed it on his hat. "Now you just knock that off," he cried.

It was a terrific spectacle to see those two giants pitted against each other, their collision depending on the violent removal of a chip from one's hat! On such trifles do great events often depend. Siah — the contemptible fellow! — winked at Joe, who, in imitation of Napoleon when he dispersed the mob of Paris by firing shotted guns first, struck Ike instead of the chip, and he fell in the dirt. But he aroused a lion by doing this; and, recovering his feet, Ike went for his assailant. Joe was of good pluck; but he was no match for Ike, who, backed by Siah, and filled with rage, seemed as large again as he was. Joe saw, perhaps, this difference of size, and turned to run, going towards a little rill that flowed along across the road into a field opposite.

Just as he reached this Ike overtook him, and pushed him in, from which he crawled and went home.

It is painful to record a scene like this; but the introduction of a brook of water at the close seems to soften the sanguinary feature, and renders it less like those descriptions given by the writers-up of great battles on their termination. So Ike went home a victor, though somehow he felt meanly about it. Wellington, the great soldier, said that the next worst thing to a great defeat was a great victory; and Ike felt this on a small scale. Mrs. Partington saw his disturbed looks.

"What is the matter, dear?" she said.

"Nothing," he replied, in a surly tone.

"Nothing?" looking him over: "don't try to keep it from me; for I know better, with the dirt on your jacket. Tell me this minute."

"Joe Moody struck me."

"What for?"

"Only because I told him to knock a chip off of my hat."

"And did you brook the outrage?"

"No, I brooked him."

He confessed the whole to her, and she then showed him the folly and wickedness of boys quarrelling, her spectacles radiant with wisdom and kindness; informing him that though courage was a good thing, and the power to back it excellent, it was no proof of either to put chips on hats for other boys to knock off. Then she sent him to bed, to dream of his great battle; but the dream was not pleasant, nor when he got up next day were his waking thoughts any more so. He felt ashamed, because he saw through the trick of Siah, and was provoked to think that he had been made a fool of. He had lost a friend, for which he was sorry; but his pride would not allow him to make a motion towards reconciliation.

The next day, or the next evening, accident brought about what a month of studied effort might not have done. A dozen of the boys, including Ike and Joe, had been down town to see or do something, and were returning towards the Corner, when first one and then another of the boys would drop out at his own gate, until the two foes were left together. They had not spoken all the evening, and now were going side by side, the last of the party. They walked on in silence, at first, until Ike said, —

"Joe."

"What?"

"I've been a fool."

"I know it."

"But I won't be so any more. I'm sorry."

"What are you sorry for?"

"Sorry you struck me."

"And I'm sorry you pushed me into the water."

"Well, let's make it up."

"Agreed."

So they chatted along as if they had never felt angry with each other; and Ike slept sweetly that night, with a peaceful dream, giving Joe, the next morning, three doughnuts, which he had taken from Mrs. Partington's stores, as a peace-offering; and Joe gave him three white alley marbles as a like sacrifice. Depend upon it, there is no emotion of which the heart is capable that carries with it such a sense of happiness as that of making up after a quarrel. Both the little fellows felt thus; and this is the moral of the tragic episode which has been here described.

CHAPTER XIII.

RACE WITH THE TEACHER. — BIG ON ICE. — COASTING ON CRUFT'S HILL. — THE "RED FAWN" AND "KING OF THE COAST." — MOUNTING THE DRIFT. — IKE TRIUMPHANT. — GRUM OFF HIS LEGS. — BOYS WILL BE BOYS.

IKE couldn't have told, for the life of him, when winter began, so little was he expecting it. It came very slyly, without making any fuss about it. While he was doing up the autumnal fun, and before he knew it, the creek had a coating of ice upon it half an inch thick; and the old cellar was frozen over so hard, that the boys could slide upon it, and make "tidly benders," without any more accident than sometimes breaking through the ice and wetting their feet. The frogs had gone long before; for frogs, though cold-blooded, disappear before cold weather, but come out bravely in the spring, like fashionable folks, but *they* never change their fashions. The winds blew cold over

the creek; and Captain Bob's boats were drawn up, except "The Jolly Robin," which the ice had caught before he could see to it, and now lay in a cradle like the vessels that get frozen in at the North Pole. So Ike and the boys thought when they found it out, and thought, too, what fine fun it would be to build a house over it, "make believe" it was Arctic night, dress up in fur jackets, eat candles, and do as the explorers in the ice-regions do! They debated this; but there were some obstacles in the way, and so they abandoned it.

As soon as the creek froze over hard enough, then came the skaters, and the surface was made lively by them. The new teacher was a capital skater. He came up on the creek the first half-holiday, and challenged the boys to try a race with him.

"I'll give a dime," said he, "to the boy that will beat me."

The whole school was there. They all skated slowly up the creek to the swimming-pool of summer, and then started down; and such skating!

"Hurrah!" shouted the boys.

At first only; for they soon found that they needed all their breath to enable them to keep up

with the master. He beat them all, the first race; and now they challenged him to try it again. He agreed to it, and they skated up to take the same start as before.

Now, — one, two, three, — go!

Away they started again, but the boys were in better trim. As they glided along, however, one after one gave out, until, as they neared the goal, only Ike and another had kept up with the teacher. Ike was gaining on him. In another moment he would be even with him; in another, perhaps pass him, when his skate-strap parted, caught under the iron, and Ike pitched towards the teacher like a battering-ram, catching hold of his coat-tails as he fell; and in an instant both of them went rolling along the ice. The teacher's hat tore away, as if it were eager to keep up the race with the other boy, who went over the course. The teacher was much provoked, until he learned how it happened; and then he laughed, telling Ike he would be careful how he challenged him again, as he had proved such a good skater, and gave him the promised dime, which Ike generously shared with the other fellow.

Soon the snow covered the hill and the creek.

The skating was destroyed, and sleds of all kinds began to appear. There were short sleds and long sleds, broad sleds and narrow sleds, old sleds and new sleds, sleds painted and sleds unpainted, bearing all sorts of names. Cruft's Hill was a famous "coast" for the boys of Rivertown. It was a long and gentle slope to the edge of the creek; and along the bank of the latter ran a fence designed to keep the cattle from straying away around the shore. There was a slight rise of the ground before reaching the fence, which checked the speed of the coasters, and prevented them from injuring themselves.

One night there began a tremendous snow-storm, before which all the other snow-storms of the season had been just nothing at all, and which lasted two days. The snow piled up in huge drifts as high as a man; and some small houses were entirely covered with it. The roads were so filled with the drift, that the people had to turn out with cattle and big ox-sleds in order to make a path; and several days passed before there was any more coasting on the hill. But the weather moderated, the snow settled down, and soon the sleds were all out again. The wind, blowing through an opening

between the boards, had made a drift as high as the fence itself, which rose to a tall peak inside it, leaving an open space between the drift and the fence. This drift, which had a wide base in addition to the rise alluded to, presented an obstacle which all tried to get over; but not one succeeded. The best sleds ran only to the foot of the drift, and could rise no higher.

A boy named Jim Draper had come from Boston on a visit a short time before, and had brought his sled with him. It was of elegant workmanship, painted superbly in red and gold, and had the name "Red Fawn" on the sides. The boys admired it, feeling willing to admit themselves and their sleds beaten, even before they tried it on the coast. It was, indeed, very fast; and, as it flashed in the sun while running down hill, they cheered it, and admitted that it was the "boss sled" of the whole, though it could not get over the big snow-drift down by the fence. Ike did not see it in the same light that the rest did, but went down to consult Captain Bob. He had seen a large old sled hanging up in the captain's barn, and had heard the old fellow praise it.

"Is that sled swift, Captain?" said he.

"Swift? That isn't the word for it. She can fly."

"Can she? When did she ever fly?"

"Well, it was a good many years ago, and when I lived with old Squire Furber, up in the mountains. I had been out one day to get some brush, when, just as I was hauling it home on that 'ere very sled, I heard some wolves yelp; and they were pretty near too. So I started to run, but they come nearer; and, just as I got to the brow of a steep hill, they were almost upon me. I jumped onto the sled, and let her go. And she *did* go! I never see sich going as that was. Why, Lor' bless you! in two minutes the wolves were out of sight; and, when I got down to the farm, them runners was so hot that they sissed in the snow."

"Think she'll go so now?" asked Ike eagerly.

"I dessay, but I haven't tried her speed lately; but, every time I take her out, it seems as if she kinder twitched to get away, and I can scacely keep her from my heels."

"Well, will you lend her to me?"

"What for?"

"Why, to run down Cruft's Hill with that Boston fellow, who thinks he has got a sled that can beat all creation."

"Yes, you can take her; but be sure you beat him," said the captain, smiling.

Ike promised, and started with the sled, which was an old-looking affair enough; and the captain, who couldn't help joking, had told him what he had about it merely for the fun of it, and had not the least idea that his old sled could run at all. It was a creaky and rough affair, but seemed to go over the snow easily; and Ike, who had believed all that the captain had told about her good qualities, dragged her up to the hill where "The Red Fawn" still was beating all the other sleds. Pulling his sled over the fence, and dragging it slowly up the hill, he was greeted with a shout of laughter when he reached the top.

"What have you got there?" cried one.

"Here comes Noah's ark," said another.

"What do you ask for slabs?" shouted a third.

"What are you going to do with that sand-dragger?" asked the fourth.

"What's her name?" put in Jim Draper, laughing heartily.

"Her name is 'The King of the Coast,'" replied Ike, "and she's going to beat all the sleds on this hill."

"Ha! ha! ha!" they all shouted in chorus at this.

"Then get out of the way," said Ike.

"'Twill come to pieces before you get to the bottom."

"You'd better get your life insured."

"We'll follow on, and pick up the pieces."

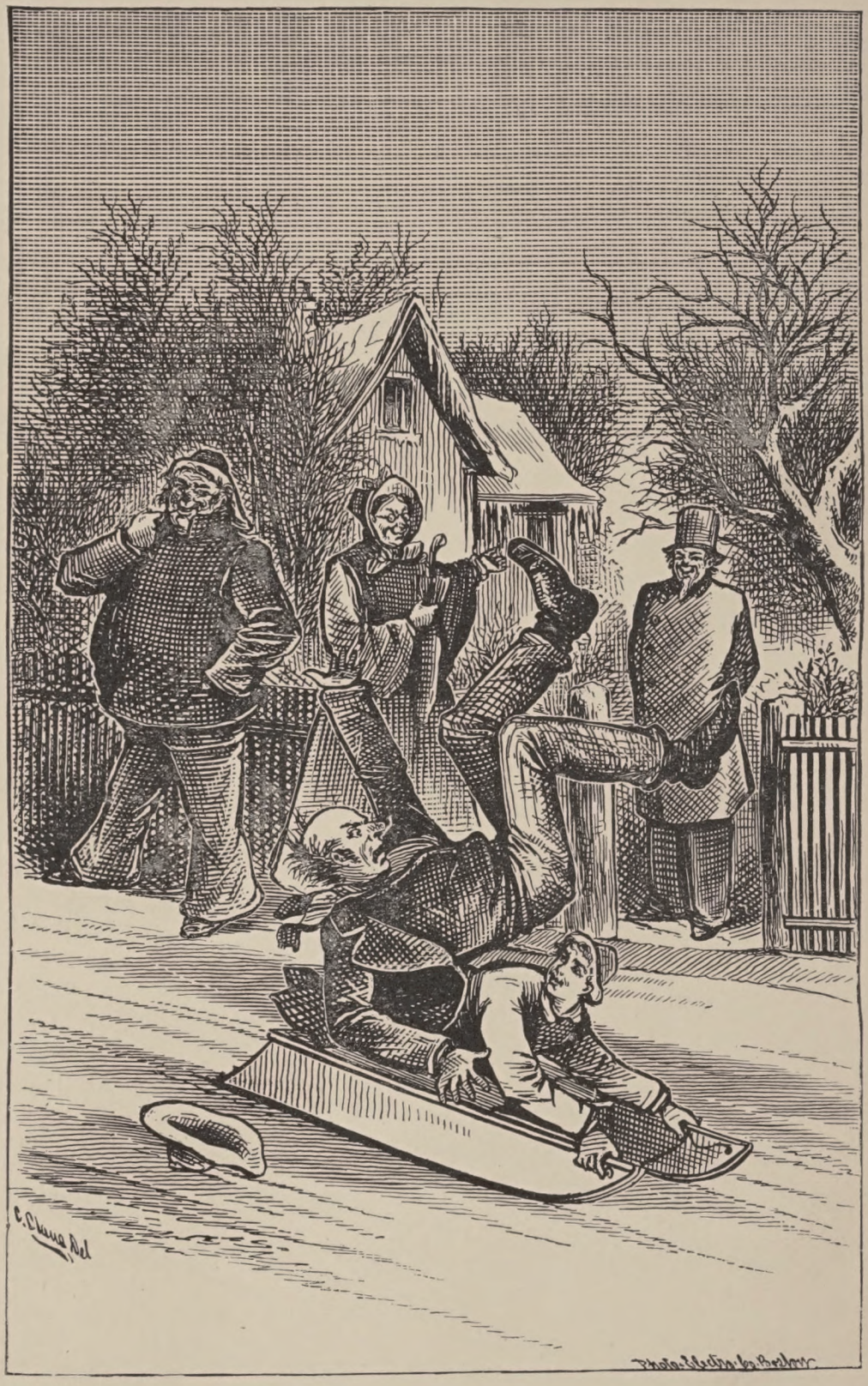
These were the jeers from the boys on the hill; but Ike didn't care.

"Say," said Ike to Draper, "suppose you go down first, so that I can see how you do it."

"No, sir," he replied: "I don't run with such a barge as that."

"Well, then, here I go!" and, giving a short run, he threw himself on the sled, and dashed down the hill with the speed of a racer.

From laughing, the boys looked on with silent wonder to see the time he made. He increased in swiftness as he flew along the icy track. Down, down he went, until there arose before him the steep drift which had defied all efforts to get to the top of it. He ran over the little rise at the foot of it easily; and then, dashing up the bank of snow in full sight, he disappeared from view beyond!



The boys — all but Draper — shouted "Hurrah" for victorious Ike; but where was the victor? They expected to see him come out to receive their congratulations, but he didn't; and, running down, they found that the sled had dropped down between the snow-drift and the fence, while Ike had been pitched upon the fence beyond, and had just concluded to breathe again as they found him. The way they cheered him and cheered the old sled, which they now called "The King of the Coast," soon brought him back to his feelings; but Draper went off as mad as a hatter because the fickle crowd had left his sled to patronize the "barge."

"The King" maintained its honors, and all were allowed to go down on it; but no one was ambitious enough to try the drift at the bottom again. As they were coasting, Mr. Grum, who had been across the field on some errand, was returning, and was picking his way down the hill so busily that he did not hear the sound of "Uller! uller!" which Ike shouted as he moved swiftly along with his back next the sky. In an instant he and Ike were back to back, Mr. Grum's feet in the air, and kicking about as if they were

trying to dance a hornpipe on nothing. He was very much mortified and very angry; the more so as Mrs. Partington, who had heard that Ike had been hurt, and come out to see about it, was standing where she witnessed the accident.

"Well," said she to him, "I never saw any thing like that before."

"Probably not, ma'am," replied he, "because I slid down backwards; but no thanks to that boy of yours that I was not killed. And, if I had my way, I'd put 'em all in Bridewell."

Captain Bob had also come up to see how Ike had done with his sled, and stood leaning on the fence, chewing a straw.

"Nonsense, Grum!" said he, "that's nothing to growl about. What would you say if you were served as the old fellow was who weighed four hundred pounds, and was caught just as you were, and carried down hill and across a street, right through the front of a brick four-story house, and landed on the supper-table? You'd have some reason to complain, should such a thing happen; but, as it didn't, what's the use of growling? The boy got the worst of it."

"I hope so," said Grum as he moved away.

Mrs. Partington, after some smiling remark to Captain Bob about "the life and animosity" of boys who will be boys in spite of all efforts to make them any thing else, also moved homeward; and the captain, having secured his sled for some service, followed after, saying to Ike, —

"Didn't I tell you she'd fly?"

But he couldn't see into it exactly. The old sled maintained its reputation as "King of the Coast" in many a trial after that; and Ike told the boys the story of Captain Bob and the wolves; but they didn't quite believe it, though they didn't doubt the sled.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DROWNED BOY. — CAPTAIN BOB'S EFFORT. — THE FAITH THAT KILLS SNAKES. — NORTH END AND SOUTH END. — THE SNOW-FORT. — BATTLE OF NEW ORLEANS. — REVERSING HISTORY.

IT must not be supposed, from the stories told about the creek, that its happenings were all pleasant, and had no drawbacks. There was, upon that little creek, almost as great a variety of incidents as the broad ocean could show, — storm and calm, rain and shine, commerce, shipwreck, and death, — one change following another; the resemblance, however, not so plain, because the scene was so much smaller in its scope. There was a fearful calamity which happened upon the creek, following close upon the incident described in the last chapter, that gave sadness to the whole community of Rivertown.

During the winter, when the ice upon the creek was covered with snow, the creek was made a

highway of; and huge loaded teams and sleighs crossed and recrossed it in many directions. When firmly frozen, these paths were as safe as the land; but on one spot, opposite the flood-gates, where the tide rushed in, it merely skimmed over. Between this skimming and the firm ice there was often a crust frozen a little harder, but not strong enough to bear a man; and this was carefully avoided.

One cold morning, as Ike was walking upon the creek, he saw little Johnny Cross on his way to school on the other side, where the red belfry rose above the trees, and he could hear the bell ringing as he went along. He was too far away for Ike to hail him, and warn him of his danger; but he was moving towards the thin ice, swinging his satchel over his head as he went. Ike stood still, and watched him, a mere speck out there upon the ice; for he was only a very small boy. Others from the other side had seen the little fellow's danger too; for they were down on the strong ice, waving him back, but he evidently did not understand them. He kept right on. He was now crossing the ice that was strong enough to bear a weight as light as his; but beyond was the weak

ice that had frozen during the turn of the tide. The gestures of those on the other side were more earnestly made; and Ike could hear, against the wind, their cries of remonstrance. It seemed as if Johnny had also heard them; for he stopped in a sort of uncertain manner for an instant, and then took a step forward again. That fatal step! The thin ice broke beneath his tread, and he sank from sight. Ike turned back, and ran screaming, —

"Captain Bob! Captain Bob! there's a boy drowning!"

"What's that, mother?" said the captain, as he and his wife sat at breakfast; but, without waiting for her answer, he rushed to the door which overlooked the creek.

"What is it?" said he, as he saw Ike.

"Boy in the creek! Boy in the creek!"

"Where?"

"Why, *there*," pointing to the spot: "don't you see his cap?"

The boy was wild with excitement, and jumped up and down on the ice, and wrung his hands like a crazy person, crying all the while. He thought the captain would never come: but the ancient

mariner only waited to kick off his boots, and throw his coat to his wife; and then he rushed over the ice in his stocking-feet for the drowning boy's rescue, throwing off, as he ran, his vest and other little impediments of clothing. Some people from the other side had reached the scene first, but they seemed paralyzed with terror.

"Be lively, boys!" shouted Captain Bob. "Bring some boards! Rip down the fences!"

A dozen boys set off for boards, which were there in a few minutes, with more coming; the tearing down of the fences seeming to give a pleasant relief, for the moment, to the grief which overwhelmed them. As quick as possible these boards were extended over the ice between the drowning boy and the thick ice: but there were not enough to bear up a heavy man; and so, though they worked rapidly, and were ready to "rip down" every thing to procure boards, there was some little delay, during which Captain Bob sat, personally, very coolly upon the boards, but chafing with impatience, and yelling to the boys for "more boards."

During this time an occasional glimpse was had of the struggling boy in the water, who had not

sunk; and hope was strong that he might be reached in season to save him. The boards were brought rapidly; and now another volunteered, who joined the captain on the boards; and they both worked their way out to where they could see the boy near the surface, and his little cap lying on the broken ice.

Some impulsive people had thought of "The Jolly Robin" as she lay frozen into the ice, and after great effort had dragged her to the spot, covered, outside and in, with ice, and launched her into the water. The volunteer assistant to Captain Bob had given his watch and papers to one of the most nervous of the by-standers, to keep for him; and this person, for what reason could not be seen, was the first to jump into the boat. He was followed by one or two others, when down she went, like a chunk of ice, and the gold watch and the papers were ruined.

A cry of "SEE!" ran through the crowd, and all looked towards the drowning boy. A little hand was seen raised above the water, which paused for a moment, then moved gradually forward and disappeared, the last motion of the drowning boy perceptible.

He had been in the water half an hour before the captain and his ally reached him; and when he was taken out he was quite dead. He was carried to the nearest house by Captain Bob, and every thing done to revive him, but in vain.

It was a very sad event, but the incidents that crowd upon a boy fortunately prevent his dwelling long upon any one; and therefore, beyond the moment, the tide of life swept on as usual, and the affair was only recalled as the old "Jolly Robin" lay all winter on the spot where she sank, and the little cap rested on the ice, serving as reminders of the melancholy affair, till the spring came, and then all that was painful vanished from sight and memory.

"Were you cold out there on the ice?" Ike asked of Captain Bob next day.

"Did you never read," said the captain gravely, "in the Testament, that, if you have faith of the right brand, nothing shall harm ye?—and how Paul got bit by a snake, you know, and he jerked it off into the fire, and it didn't hurt him."

Ike didn't think he had read it.

"Then you'd better; for there's a principle in that which applies to this 'ere case, or any case,

where a man is chock full of the wish to help somebody else. Fire, water, weather, exposure, nothing'll hurt him. Cold! why, bless you, I didn't feel nigh so cold as I did where I sat at breakfast when you called me to save that drowning boy."

"Yes," replied Ike; "but you might have got drowned yourself, and wouldn't you be harmed then?"

"No; for the feeling would continue the same, though the body drownded. I tell you, youngster, that no harm *can* happen to a man that does right. That's the faith to kill snakes with."

Ike didn't understand it exactly; but he respected the captain's grave look, and went out with a profound admiration for one who had done so brave a deed, shying a chunk of ice at Grum's cat which sat sunning herself on the fence.

The boys of the North and South "Ends" of Rivertown were hostile to each other by inheritance and instinct, and Ike had dropped right into the North-End faction. From early time numerous battles had taken place between the two, with an historical balance in favor of the North End. The South-End boys, however, were clamorous in

making the assertion that the South End could "lick" the North End, and give them odds. There had not, however, been any demonstration for a number of years. Both factions attended the same school, studied the same lessons, played together and associated very pleasantly on personal grounds; but when the subject of "who was best" was broached, then talk grew loud, and brag boisterous.

The winter was very favorable for great games of snowballing; but such are usually played on the principle of the Irishman at Donnybrook fair, who, when he saw a head, hit it. So the snowballs flew at random, and everybody got hit. There was an immense drift, covering acres, over in a field near the schoolhouse; and a young engineer, who did not dream that he was any such thing, suggested that there would be a "bang-up place" for building a snow fort. They had got along in their history to the Battle of New Orleans; and the 8th of January was approaching, the anniversary of the day on which that eventful battle was fought.

The suggestion of a fort, in connection with their history, wrought the whole school up to a

high pitch of excitement. "A fort!" they cried, "by all means!" and then, even before it became fully decided to have the fort, the question arose, and was violently discussed, as to who should be the commanders. The most desirable position was that in the fort, of course; and who should personate Gen. Jackson, was matter for profound deliberation. And the choice of Gen. Pakenham was equally momentous; for though he was to be defeated according to history, he was the general of the British forces, and an object of deep interest.

The discussion waked up the clannish feeling on both sides: the South-Enders contending, that, as Jackson was a Southerner, one of their side should personate him of course; and the North-Enders were equally strenuous for one of their side, contending that Jackson went from the North, and had a brother who was a soap-boiler down in Deer Street. At last it was decided by lot; a boy of each side pulling a straw out of a bundle of unequal lengths, held by one who was considered impartial; and the result was, —

GEN. JACKSON . . . JOSIAH TREAT.
GEN. PAKENHAM . . . IKE PARTINGTON.

When this was settled, the two armies of equal numbers were counted off from both "Ends," and then was commenced work on the fortifications. The young engineer went over the ground, or over the snow, and laid out his plans with a genius worthy of Todleben, or any other Ben. The works combined all the science of Bunker Hill, Yorktown, New Orleans, and Sebastopol, protected on one side by a deep brook, on another by a tree and a rock, while in front were deep trenches for rifle-pits, or snowball depositories; and on the other side more trenches for defence against assailants on that side. The redoubt itself was a square, or oblong-square, chamber, dug out of the solid drift; and the ramparts were formed of the blocks of snow, which had been cut square on purpose, and hoisted to their place with great labor. A sally-port, for escape or for defence, was cut in the rear, and the whole affair was as grand as you please, and as strong as a castle. Port-holes had been left all around, not for big guns, but to enable the occupants of the fort to see the approach of the enemy, which they could not very well do through the solid walls. The teacher, who knew what was going on, and rather liked the practical

historical lesson, went over to see the fort, and said, that, of all the forts he had ever seen, he had never seen one like this before, which the engineer thought a great compliment.

The 8th of January came upon Saturday; and the news got round about the great fight that was to take place between the South-Enders under Gen. Jackson, and the North-Enders under Gen. Pakenham. Everybody that could come determined to be there. The South End had delegates from Brimstone Hill, Puddle Dock, Pancake Shelf, Heart's Delight, Devil's Bend, and Lilac Lane; and the North End was represented by a crowd from Gravelly Ridge, Rope-walk Lane, Rock Pasture, Clam Corner, Saints' Rest, Hard Knock, and Mumblepeg. All came to see fair play, and the spirit of the two parties was pretty well up. Captain Bob was there also, and gave assurance to the North-Enders by telling of numerous instances where he himself had, when younger, "fit" a good many such battles, and never got licked.

"But the North-Enders have *got to be* licked," said one of the spectators.

"What for?" queried the captain.

"Because 'tis history. Pakenham was licked, you know."

"You let history take keer of itself. Circumstances allers alters cases, and we can't sometimes most allers tell how any thing's going to turn out before it happens."

"I don't see how it can be helped."

"Don't you fret, honey. Did you ever hear of Bologna, the great sassage-maker, who the heathen made their secretary of war? You never did? Well, in one of his battles he had to take a fort, and loaded his guns with sassages, and poured 'em against the wall so thick that the grease mixed in with the mortar, and down the walls tumbled, when Bologna jest walked right in."

"Never heard of it; but *Jackson* won the battle of New Orleans."

"Don't you worry. 'Twill all come out right, I tell you. And you had better read up on histerical matters so's not to be cornered again."

"See, they are going to begin."

The occupants of the fort had hoisted a small American flag, which blew out defiantly on the breeze. They had also two or three fish-horns,

which they were blowing very fiercely. Occasionally a head would be seen stuck out of one of the port-holes; for an instant, and then drawn in again like a clam's. It was evident that the garrison was very busy at the fort.

The other side had been equally busy in their preparations. The work of attack was all laid out, and parties appointed for particular objects, such as skirmishers and sharp-shooters; and Gen. Pakenham, which was Ike, had told them what to do. So very soon the main body of the British army moved along the bank of the brook, which was supposed to be the Mississippi River; while the skirmishers and sharp-shooters, with their arms and pockets full of hard snowballs, moved up the gentle hill on which the fort was built. They were to begin; and then the main body was to come up, and attack in force. But the skirmishers began too soon; and the garrison rushed on them pell-mell, taking two prisoners who couldn't run with rubber boots on, and pitching three others into the snow. They then met the main body with such a tremendous fire that it was completely demoralized, and ran down hill as fast as it could go.

The South-Enders at this set up a great shouting, and were highly delighted. Captain Bob's friend, who was a North-Ender, said he didn't like to see the North-End boys defeated, to accommodate any old history; and he thought history was a great humbug, any way.

"I tell ye 'twill all come out right," said Captain Bob, "history or no history. I know Jackson ought to beat, because I know that history says he did; but then, jest see, that history is sixty years old, and must have underwent a change by this time; and depend on it, we shall see what we shall see."

The army formed again, and this time marched in full force toward the redoubt. There was silence among the spectators as the gallant fighters moved up the hill before them. It was like the hush before a storm. Then came a shrill voice from the hill, which was known to be Ike's, crying, "*Pitch in!*" and with a leap as if each one had just then felt the shock of a battery behind, they sprang towards the works. They were met bravely. The snowballs flew thick as bullets at Waterloo. The shouts of the belligerents were excited and loud. Still the flag waved

over the scene, and Victory withheld her decision. The battle raged fiercer and fiercer, and it was still uncertain which way the fate of the day would be decided, when Gen. Jackson, stepping into the long trench, received a snowball in the ear, which disabled him; and Gen. Coffee hung out a flag of truce for an armistice to enable him to go down to the brook, and wash his eye, which was closed by a ball.

The two armies rested on the field for a few minutes; and, when hostilities were resumed, a party scaled the parapet by means of the tree, as the British did at Bunker Hill, and a volley of snowballs, poured in on the garrison, showed how hopeless the contest was. The flag was lowered, and Gen. Pakenham was declared the victor over Gen. Jackson! Such a ridiculous perversion of history no one ever heard of before; but the honor of the North End was more to be regarded than historical accuracy, and Pakenham's forces consummated the victory by singing "Hold the Fort."

As soon as the spectators saw how the day was going, there was great commotion among them, and quarrelsome words were interchanged. Then

a snowball or two were thrown, then more snowballs, and a general row seemed imminent. Old Mrs. Luke was standing looking over her garden fence, her cap, like a circus-tent, rising above her features, when a snow-ball, violently hurled, struck the cap, tearing it from her head, and bearing it away with the strings stretched out like the double train of a meteor. As a ball struck Captain Bob, he shouted in a severe voice, —

"If you don't stop, and get out of this, I'll serve you as I did a man down here the other day, that I told to get out of the way."

The captain was a favorite with everybody, and his words excited their curiosity. He also was pound-keeper.

"Well, what *did* you do?" one asked, after waiting a little.

"Why, I told him to get out of my way, and he said he would see me further first; and then I asked him seriously if he really meant so. He said he did. Well, says I, then, if you won't get out of the way, *I will!* And, by jolly, I did."

This raised a laugh; and with a cheer for the captain the crowd dispersed, the North End still holding the fort, in spite of history.

CHAPTER XV.

WINTER EVENINGS. — NEIGHBORLY GATHERINGS. — A NIGHT AT MRS. PARTINGTON'S. — STORY BY THE TEACHER. — CAPTAIN BOB REGARDING MERMAIDS.

"OH the long and dreary winter!" Hiawatha says; but he wouldn't have oh'd so if he had been with the boys of Rivertown. In fair weather, however cold, they glowed with air and exercise, and were full of happiness. No oh-ing or repining about them.

"I am glad, dear," said Mrs. Partington to Ike, on one occasion of many that were similar, — "I am glad to see you so dilated; for our happiness depends mostly on how we enjoy ourselves."

"Yes'm," replied Ike, as he fished round the bottle, with his fork, for the last preserved cherry.

On cold long evenings the boys would visit at each other's homes, and tell stories or play games, and the older members of the families would

sometimes join with them in reading or singing; and the evenings were passed by the boys just as agreeably as if they were standing on the street-corners making remarks about people going by, and indulging in ridiculous talk. On one occasion the boys had met at Ike's, and were having a capital time. They were at times apt to be noisy; to which Mrs. Partington made little objection, though she had been heard to confess that sometimes she thought the "sciatic nerve of her head" would break with the confusion. Constantly keeping in view the universal fact that "boys will be boys," she tolerated their noise without complaint, and smiled even amid her pain. Some new games had been introduced this evening that were particularly boisterous, among which were "The Hutchinson Family" and "The Muffin-Man;" the latter requiring considerable muscular exertion and a good deal of voice. The fun waxed fast and furious, the whole party being on their feet in full cry, when Mrs. Partington raised her finger.

"Hush!" said she, listening: "I thought I heard some one at the door."

They were all still in an instant, when the bell was heard; and Mrs. Partington, going to the door,

returned with Miss Fuller, who was a favorite teacher in the Rivertown school which the boys attended, and had come in for an evening call.

"You heard our noissomeness?" Mrs. Partington said to the visitor, smiling.

Miss Fuller said she had heard the boys enjoying themselves, and hesitated at first about coming in, for fear that she might disturb their hilarity. She greatly enjoyed seeing boys at their sports, and begged they would continue just as if she was not there.

But her presence was a damper; and they all came very suddenly to the conclusion that they had had enough of roughing it, and would be content to sit down and enjoy something more quiet. So they seated themselves; and Miss Fuller, who was a very bright and pleasant little lady, made the time pass so agreeably by her conversation, that they forgot all about "The Muffin-Man," and were very happy to listen to her. She told them a great many useful and pretty things; and then Ike, with a very eager face, asked her if she could not tell them a story.

She replied that teachers were not very funny people, and she was afraid that she had nothing

very laughable to tell them; but Ike said they wanted a *good* story, and didn't care about its being funny. Mrs. Partington seconded the request by saying that nothing gave more "jest" to enjoyment than a good story; and Miss Fuller, knowing that she meant "zest," said she would tell them about

AN ANGEL THAT CAME FROM HEAVEN BY WATER.

There was very a poor man, a fisherman, who lived near the mouth of a swift river, like our own, who made his living by line and net, catching fishes in the sea that stretched away before him, and selling them to people who lived in a large town on the opposite side of the stream from him. He was a jolly old fellow, even in his poverty, though he could hardly support himself and wife, the only members of his family except a cat and a tame crow. To tell the truth, he used to drink, and waste his money in buying that which did him no good; and sometimes, when he had drank too much, he would scold his wife, and make her very unhappy. When sober he was always singing and joking, and it was pleasant to listen to him.

"Wife," he would sometimes say, "we have not as much money as some of our neighbors; but we have a fine farm out here on the sea, and will get a harvest from it some day."

[Ike and Sim Walters exchanged a look, as this brought up a memory of Commodore Huntress's "garden."]

One morning, as the fisherman was preparing his lines before he went out in his boat, he saw something drifting down in the tide which puzzled him. It somewhat resembled a boat, but evidently was not one. It seemed to be some rough boards nailed together, like an oblong box; and it whirled round and round in the tide that brought it towards the shore where he was standing. It came almost into the land; and then an eddy took it, and bore it farther out. He was undecided whether he should get into his boat, and go after it, or not.

The morning was very pleasant and still; and the sun shone brightly on the water, dazzling the fisherman's eyes as he gazed. He stood, shading his eyes with his hand, watching the object as it moved here and there in the rough tide, when he thought he heard a faint cry, as if from something

in distress. He deemed at first that it might be a cry from the opposite shore; but a moment afterward it was repeated, and this time it seemed to come from the box.

"That's queer," said he to himself: "what upon earth can it be that makes such music in that curious box? But I'll soon find out."

He jumped into his boat, and pushed her off in pursuit of the retreating box, which he soon reached. If any one had been on the shore at the moment, watching him, they would have observed the start of surprise he gave, and heard the long whistle which he sounded, as he looked at his prize. They would also have seen the eagerness with which he attached the strange vessel to his own to tow it ashore. This was done in a minute, and, as he stepped on the land, he cried out, —

"Wife, wife, make haste here! here's one of our treasures come to us!"

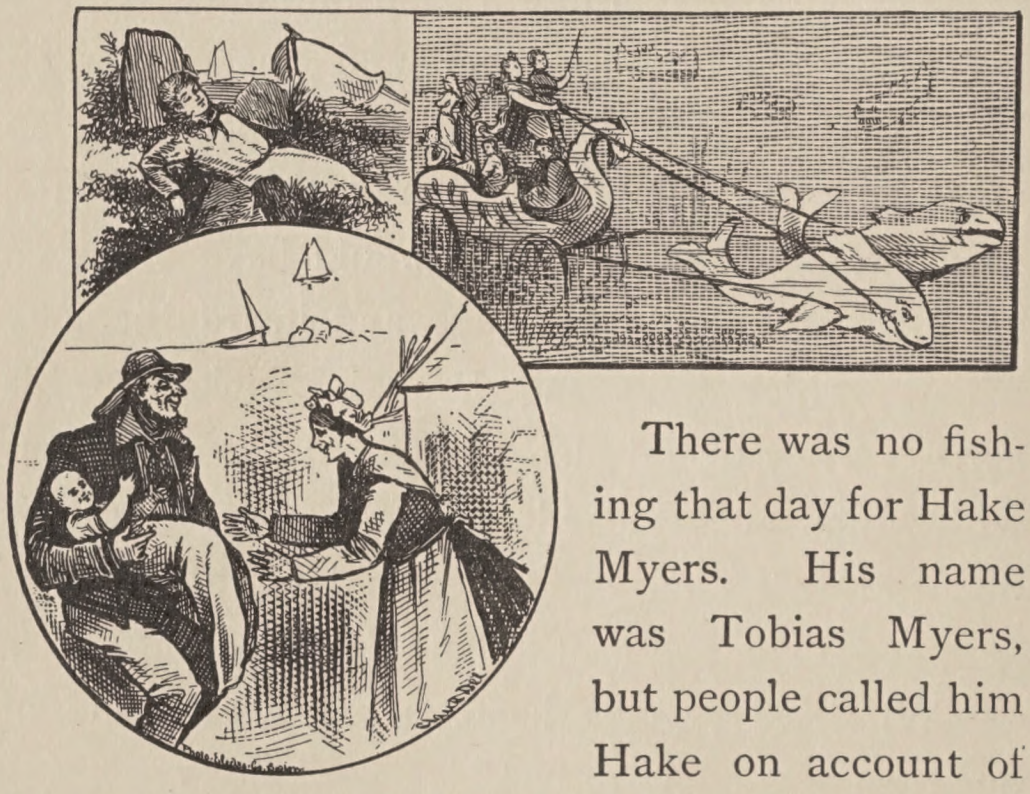
"What is it?" she cried, hastening to the shore as fast as she could.

"Put on your spectacles, old lass, and see," he said with great glee.

"Why, if it isn't a baby!" she almost screamed as she lifted the little thing from its strange cradle.

"There's a plaything for you," said he, "better than the cat and crow, — a real live baby, ready-made and provided for," taking, as he spoke, a bundle of baby-clothing from the box.

"'Tis a little angel from heaven, come by water," she replied.



There was no fishing that day for Hake Myers. His name was Tobias Myers, but people called him Hake on account of his profession. "Call me any thing you please," he would say, "only don't call me too late to dinner." He and his wife were both completely carried away, forgetting every thing but the baby; and they willingly stood watch and watch in taking care of it. At length Mrs. Hake came to her senses enough to say, —

"Well, but it isn't ours."

"I say it is ours," replied Hake: "what I pick up in this river belongs to me; and this baby is mine, the same way."

They then turned the baby this way and that way, trying to find some name or word to show where it came from. Then they overhauled the box it came in, for the same object; but nothing could be found. The box was roughly made, but stoutly put together, pitched at the corners to keep the water out, and had evidently been made by some one for the very use to which it had been put. They concluded, therefore, that the little voyager had been sent adrift purposely. It was a little girl, apparently not more than a month or two old, as beautiful as a fairy, with charms enough, Hake said, to set up a dozen romancers, and fully justified Mrs. Hake's assertion that she was an angel come from heaven by water.

There was a large town up the river, called Bonville; and the fisherman went there to make all the inquiry he could for information that would throw light on the matter, but it was with the hope that he should hear nothing about it for fear he might have to give the baby up. But though he adver-

tised in the papers, and made many inquiries, no one appeared to claim it; and he went home happy. Several offered to take it off his hands, but he would not listen to them.

"I am poor," he said, "but Heaven didn't send that box down to me in that way without a good reason; and I'm going to keep the baby."

And he did. He stuck to his resolution like a man. And, strangely enough, his luck changed. He found good market for his fish, and money came in briskly. He couldn't see how it was; but his wife knew that he had given up his drink, and that was why the dollars came in so, when they were so very poor before. Both were very happy, and all because of that little angel that came, as Mrs. Hake would have it, "from heaven in a rough pine box."

They named her May, because it was May when she was found; though the schoolmaster of the district called her "Fleur de la Mer," a name by which she was everywhere known. She was white as a lily; and the three pets — the baby, the cat, and the crow — presented a strange contrast, the cat being yellow, and the crow black. They were all the best friends in the world.

But she was not always to remain a baby. She grew to be a sweet and pleasant child, the delight of everybody. She early learned her own story from the old folks. Hake would take her on his knee, and tell her all about it; and thus she was soon led to regard the sea as a sort of mother to her. The moaning sound of the waves was a lullaby; and when the storms raged, and the great waves rolled in on Ragged Rock Point, she would hear it with silent awe, deeming it a note of anger and reproof. She loved to sing of the sea, and there were many songs taught her by the people of the place where she lived. Such of them as alluded to the motherly qualities of the sea were her greatest favorites. Thus she would sing, —

"Come! says the voice of the motherly sea,
Give me thy young heart glowing and warm:
Here in my breast is a haven for thee,
Safe from contention, safe from life's storm.
Dearest one, dearest one,
Never a breath of the storm-king thou'lt know
Safe in my palace, the billows below."

"Are there palaces beneath the sea?" she would ask the old fisherman, pausing in her song. And then he would tell her stories of the mer-

maidens, and the bowers of coral under the waves; of palaces made of gold and gems; and of people of the sea luring those of earth down to their beautiful home, and all the wonderful lore of the ocean, — to which she would listen with the most earnest attention. Then she would break forth again, —

"Let me infold thee in loving embrace,
Tenderly, tenderly, close in my arms:
Sorrow shall ne'er in thy heart have a place,
Ne'er shalt thou suffer earth's cares and alarms.
Dearest one, dearest one,
Never thou'lt sigh if thou comest to me,
And bide in the love of the motherly sea."

The old fisherman would hug her to his heart, and then turn her sweet face to the light, seeing in her dreamy eyes something which he could not understand, and which she did not understand herself. It was only the outward expression of the longing which filled her, in association with the sea, to which she was drawn by an intense attraction.

She was at ten years a lovely child, tiny in form, playing with her companions, but oftener roaming along the shore communing with the

sea. "Mother, dear mother," she would say, "come to me, and love me. I am very sad because you do not come. I want to go with you down in the coral groves, where the mermaids sing, and the jewels are, that I may reward those who are so good to me."

Then she would listen for the response, but only heard the murmur of the waves.

One day, as she thus roamed along the shore, uttering her usual invocation, her heart felt very happy. The day was warm, bright, and beautiful. There was no breeze stirring; and the waves came to the shore in gentle billows, singing and sparkling on the sand. She had bidden the fisherman good-by as he rowed out for his customary toil, had exchanged a pleasant word with the fisherman's wife as she stood upon the bank, and was now alone. She sat down on a stone that overlooked the sea, which shimmered in the sun, and rose and fell as quietly as an infant breathing in slumber. Her full heart found vent in song:—

"Come from your caverns,
Ye maids of the sea;
Don your green mantles,
And hasten to me.

Here on the silver sands
Bright billows play:
We'll dance to their musical
Ripple all day.
Come, oh, come,
Sweet maid of the sea!
Here on the shore
I am waiting for thee."

She paused a moment, as if waiting to hear the echo of her own sweet voice, when she was startled by a sound as if from beneath the water, which seemed to chime with the murmur of the waves, and harmonized with the strain of her own melody:—

"Maid of the golden hair,
Child of the main,
Your love we may not share,
Though we are fain.
Prisoned by spirits fell,
Here we are held:
They will but break the spell
By love compelled.
Thrice turn with the sun,
Thrice bow to the sea:
Thy desire is won —
We are free! we are free!"

She listened, wonder-struck; and then, clapping her hands, she cried, in a voice of delight, —

"I will do as the sea-maidens say, and they will come and play with me."

She accordingly turned round thrice with the sun, and then bowed herself as many times to the sea, when there arose from the water a strain of the sweetest music. Colored fish were seen swimming to and fro, their sides flashing in the sunlight. Then she heard a chorus of voices coming nearer, singing, —

"Free as the air to come and go,
Free as the waves in ceaseless flow,
All the liberty we share
Coming from her love and care.
Bring her gems from coral caves,
Bring her flowers and jewels bright,
Tinged with hues of golden waves
Gleaming in the upper light;
Bless the maiden bright and fair,
The sea-maid's friend, *Fleur de la Mer*."

The sea assumed a more beautiful appearance, the waves made sweeter music on the beach, and the little girl saw rising from the sea a bright chariot of gold and blue, drawn by dolphins, and

in the chariot a maiden of most lovely aspect, while around her sported in the water a number of others equally lovely; and all bore in their hands caskets and branches full of gems. They came up to the shore, and then, approaching the little maiden, laid their treasures at her feet. She looked at them bewildered, not knowing what to say, nor which way to turn. She had long wished to meet the people of the sea; but, now they had come, she did not know what to do. They were clothed in sea-green dresses, with ocean mosses in their hair. Each had a girdle of diamonds and rubies about her waist, and in their hair were gems more costly than earth had ever seen. Their feet were bare, and the little girl looked to see if they were not web-footed.

After a moment or two, seeing her surprise, they sang, each one having a golden harp hung from her shoulder, with which they accompanied their song, —

"Maid of the sunny hair,
Child of the sea,
We come thy sport to share,
Made free by thee.

Thy love removed the spell
Holding us bound:
Thy praise our song shall swell,—
Queen thou art crowned."

Then the leader came forward, and placed on her head a crown of sea-mosses sprinkled with diamonds as large as filberts, and placed in her hand a sceptre made from the wood of ocean forests and covered with gold, while the rest silently opened their caskets of brilliants.

This was all too formal for little May: so much dignity was oppressive to her; and she took off the crown, and laid her sceptre by, saying, —

"I don't want to be a queen: I had rather run on the sands, and play with you, or have you tell me stories about your home down under the sea."

Then she asked their names, and learned that the one who had crowned her was a real princess, named Gulnare; the rest were Ripple and Sea-fern, Billow and Spraybloom, Raregem and Dults-leaf. They immediately became very social, and walked and ran along the shore, and played with May till she was tired. Then they sat down on the green bank, and told her wondrous stories about the things under the sea, — much more beautiful,

they said, than things on the land. There were palaces of gold and diamonds, and marine forests, and big fish that they rode as if they were horses, some of which were the dolphins attached to the chariot before them. They told her that a demon had laid a spell on them, so that they might not come to earth; but they had been attracted towards her by her love of the sea, and had got so near to her that they were able to give her the charm by which the spell could be broken, and they were very grateful to her for what she had done. The stories told her so delighted her that she said, —

"I wish I could go down in the halls of the sea."

"Is this your real wish?" asked the princess.

"It is."

"Will you give up every thing here for it?"

May paused to think a little. She would cause pain to those who had done so much for her, and whom she loved so well, by leaving them: but then, she thought, they were very poor, and she might be able to do them good, instead of being a burden to them, by going; for she would send a messenger fish to hang a whole basket full of

diamonds on the fisherman's hook, and make him rich. So, at this, she put her hand in that of the princess, and said, —

"I will give up all."

There was a great clapping of hands among them when she said this, for they could not have taken her without her consent; and the chariot with the dolphins drove up to the shore, into which stepped little May and the princess. They rode away out into the sea, and passed under where the old fisherman sat watching his line, little thinking that his pretty May was leaving him. She saw him, and begged the princess to let her speak to him; but this was not permitted, because if she did it would make her again a child of earth, and now she was a daughter of the sea. She mourned a little at this, but soon the novelty of her situation stilled her grief.

Then they sank down into the ocean — down, down, down; but *Fleur de la Mer* felt no inconvenience, because she was a child of the sea, like the rest. As they went down, big fishes came, and put their noses into the chariot to see if they were good to eat; but the princess rapped them with her whip, and they ran away.

At last they reached a grand city, surrounded with marine trees of rare beauty. The houses were of white stone, that shone in the light like pearl. From the limbs of the trees hung gems of large size, which grew like apples. Sea-men and sea-women and sea-children ran in and out, or rather swam in and out, among the houses and trees. There were stores and banks in the streets, kept by fish. The sharks were bankers, the pikes merchants, the swordfish soldiers, the perch speculators, the halibut landlords, the cod editors, the bluefish lawyers, the monkfish parsons. She had no time to note the fashions before they arrived at the palace.

Here was magnificence such as little May had never dreamed of. A huge swordfish, who guarded the door, received them very respectfully with a military salute. They entered, and from the door to the reception hall there was one blaze of jewels. There was no sun, and all the light came from immense diamonds as large as buckets, making it like noonday.

The king, father of the princess, was on his throne; and when little May was presented to him, he came down and kissed her, and told her he had

heard about her for a great while, and was glad she had come down to live with them. He also told her that he had, for a good while, given orders to his stewards to see that the old fisherman, her father, should never lack for fish, but always have a good fare, for her sake.

"Which was a very *fair* thing, your Majesty," said the court jester, a lobster-looking chap; whereat the courtiers all laughed.

Little May was allowed to go everywhere in the palace, and had great respect paid her by every one. The ladies of honor were instructed to treat her as well as they did the princess, and the two continued excellent friends. But sometimes she fancied the court ladies were cold towards her; and then she would think of the dear old home she had left, and long to go back just for a moment to see how her friends were situated, though there could be no doubt they were doing well, for she had sent them, several times, by special messenger, large quantities of valuable gems, to be left at their door. How she wished she had the privilege of a common cod, and could have a line from her dear old father! But there were so many things about the court to divert her, that she would forget her anxiety.

Thus things went on for several years. She had become fully accustomed to ultra marine habits and manner of living. She slept on a bed of algæ, and delighted in deep-water society, as the aristocracy of the country was called. One day she had fallen asleep on a bank of sea-moss, and was having a troubled dream which mingled the scenes below and above water in a very vivid manner. She heard familiar voices in the palace and among the trees, so she thought, which reproached her for her desertion. Then there came a great cry, which seemed to shake the palace to its very foundation, so full of bitter anguish was it, —

"May, May! my dear, darling little May! Where is my little Birdie?"

It was the voice of the old fisherman, and she wondered how he had come there. Could he have come down on one of his own cod-lines, or by the submarine telegraph? And, as she queried, the voice kept saying, —

"May, May! Where is my pretty little May?"

The trees seemed to have found tongues, and all of them echoed the sound, "May, May!" when she awoke, and found herself in the green sedge

that grew along the shore, just where she was playing with the maidens of the sea so long ago. As she started up, there were the fisherman and his wife, and several of the fisherman's neighbors, old and young, coming towards her, looking just as they did when she left, but very anxious; and when they saw her they gave a scream of delight. The old fisherman ran towards her, with his arms extended; and he clasped her to his heart, and kissed her over and over again, showing her that he had forgiven her desertion of him, for which she was very glad.

"The dear little angel!" said the fisherman's wife, taking her turn to kiss her: "she came from heaven by water, and we thought she had gone back the same way."

"Where is Gulnare?" said May, as soon as she could find breath.

"Who?" asked the fisherman.

"Gulnare, the princess," she replied; "and did you get the treasures I sent you?"

They all looked astonished, and shook their heads at each other.

"How did I get here?" she continued: "did the dolphins bring me in the king's chariot?"

"No, darling," said the old fisherman: "we missed you when I came home at noon to-day, and thought you were lost; and now we find you hid here in the sedge, all safe and sound, thank the Lord!"

She then told them all the story about the visit of the sea-maidens, and the treasure they brought, and how she went down into the ocean with them, and her life there, and how it had been interrupted by the fisherman's calling her. It was hard to convince her it was not true; but she was still only ten years old, and could not have lived there long, so she was brought to regard it as a dream, or a vision, in which there might be a glimpse of reality. How much we can dream in a little while, if we set about it!

She lived to be a comfort to the old fisherman and his wife, who affirmed, to the day of her death, that she was an angel from heaven who came to them by water.

The boys all applauded this story; and Mrs. Partington said she should think of it every time she had chowder for dinner, and fear that she was cooking up some princess that had got abdicated from home.

"Please tell us another," said Ike.

"Not to-night," she replied: "it is getting too late; and I hope none of you will try to find that country down in the sea, unless you go there in dreams, as little May did."

They laughed; and Ike said he'd like to go down in a diving-bell, and get some of the money and jewels that were there.

The next morning Ike went round, and told the story to Captain Bob. The captain heard it very gravely.

"Well," said he, "there's stranger things than that which never happened."

"Do you believe it?" asked Ike.

"Well, it mayn't be true, and then again it may be true. Didn't you never hear of mermaids?"

Ike said he had.

"Well, these 'ere were only mermaids. What'd you say to see a dozen mermaids in the morning, with combs and glasses, a-sitting on the rocks, and doing up their hair?"

"I'd believe in 'em then."

"It isn't wise nowadays to say you don't believe any thing; for, like as not, to-morrer you'll have to. At any rate, 'tis best to know something

about a thing before you make up your mind. There's a good many things we never can understand, though they're possible. Fact is, nothing's impossible 'cept putting two hills side by side without having a valley 'twixt 'em, and I ain't quite certain about that."

The captain was melting some tar to put on to the "Lively Turtle," and Ike wondered if it wasn't impossible to make her *tight* with tar. After stopping a moment to select a new shingle to whittle, he went off like a wedding-party.

CHAPTER XVI.

ICE-NAVIGATION ON THE CREEK. — IKE STRIKES A ROCK. — CRIES FOR HELP. — GRUM UNDER A NEW ASPECT. — A DOOR OF ESCAPE. — THE NEW PLANET. — AN EXPLODING STAR. — IKE'S MORAL CULTURE. — PERFORMANCE ON THE ORGAN. — COULDN'T PLAY IT ON HIM. — SLIVERING. — THE CLOSE.

AN itinerant hand-organ man had dropped in upon Rivertown, and for a month of the coldest weather was tantalizing the people with the tune, but not the air, of "Spring, spring, beautiful spring," until they were almost frantic. But by and by the snow began to melt, the buds to swell, the winds to blow more gently, the frost to leave the ground, and the ice to break up in the creek; and spring was really present almost before any one knew it. The human boy can accommodate himself to all seasons, but the spring is more to his humor. His blood flows quicker; his step is

more elastic; he thrills in every fibre with a sense of growth. He leaps with new freedom, like the brook unfettered. He takes to water like the young ducks, and delights to see the bubbling crystal force its way through the ice-chinks, and lie in pools on which he can sail his mimic boats.

That shingle of Captain Bob's, or another just like it, was soon seen with sails made of shaving, sailing gallantly before the wind, seeking ports suggested by the last geography-lesson. This is grand fun for boys. But when they break through the thinning ice, they realize from the cold that winter hasn't quite given up yet.

'Twas no uncommon thing, on the creek, to see a fleet of at least a dozen "cakes" of ice on which young navigators, with a pole to push with, were sailing to and fro, suffering hardship greater than that of the galley-slave, as a matter of labor, but glorious, for the fun of it, to the human boy. Not very deep-water sailing, fortunately; for the bottom of many of these ice boats would drop out at times, and a cold bath was sure to follow. Sometimes they would be blown away from the land, and then they were in real peril, for the creek was wide, and the water deep; but

all safely returned by walking round, and so no horrid examples frightened away any from daring the same danger.

Another danger was from sunken rocks, and Ike was put in a very perplexing predicament once by getting on one of these. He was having just about the jolliest time possible. He had the best raft of ice there was afloat, — one, in fact, that he had cut, himself, from a large body of ice that rested on the shore, which the rising tide had floated off, — and, securing one of Mrs. Partington's best clothes-poles to propel it with, he was as grand as the captain of a ship-of-war. The boys tried to imagine themselves in Venice, and that they were gay gondoliers on the Adriatic; but the weather, which was chilly, rather marred the fancy, and so they "made believe" they were shipwrecked whalemen at the North Pole, and one declared that he saw the North Pole sticking up out of the ice in the distance!

"Come," said Ike, "let's try a race."

"Agreed," was the cry.

"Well, start!"

The other rafts all started, but his stood still. He strained and pushed and pried, but it wouldn't move an inch.

"Come along," they cried; "why don't you come?"

He was like the soldier who caught the Tartar. "Why don't you come?" cried his officer. "I've caught a Tartar, sir." — "Well, bring him along, then." — "He won't come, sir." — "Well, come yourself." — "He won't let me, sir." Poor Ike had caught the Tartar; for his craft had settled gently on a rock, and the tide was falling. In vain he pushed till he was red in the face. He jumped from side to side to make it slide off, but it wouldn't slide. The Tartar wouldn't budge an inch. It was the very cream of tartar for obstinacy.

"Why don't you come?" yelled the boys, now a good distance away, who began to push for the shore.

The rock on which Ike's vessel had caught was at a considerable distance out. The sun was going down, and the temperature was three months from summer. He began to grow cold and considerably scared. He made one more desperate effort to pry it off, and the pole broke in the middle. Then he cried out lustily for help; but Captain Bob was not at home, his boats were

not launched, and there was no one about who seemed to know what to do. Mrs. Partington was frantic as soon as she heard of it.

Mr. Grum, hearing the noise, came out of his house, and asked the cause of "the row" as he called it; and, on being told what the matter was, he went into the house again, coming out a moment afterward with a bow and arrow and a great coil of line.

"He's going to shoot him!" said one of the boys in a low tone.

"Because of that time on the grass," said another.

"It's mean as dirt," said a third.

"Just like him," said a fourth.

Without saying a word, Mr. Grum tied the end of a ball of twine to the long arrow, and, fixing the arrow in the bow, aimed it over the boy on the ice, and fired. The arrow fell in the water beyond.

"Now," he shouted, "you young rascal, pull in on that twine. Pull slow."

He had attached the twine to the line, which was long enough to reach to where the boy was held on the rock; and, drawing in the twine, Ike

soon had the line in his hands. Mr. Grum then went into a shed, near his house, and, taking a large door from its hinges, threw it into the water, tying the line to it.

"Now pull gently," he yelled to the shivering boy.

The line tightened, and the boys, seeing the door float away on the water, shouted, as old Galileo did when he discovered that the earth revolved around the the sun, "It moves!" and then they gave a loud "Hurrah for Grum!" Something like a smile came over the old man's face as he heard it. The door, it was seen, had reached its destination; and now he shouted, "Jump on!" Ike did so, and it bore him. Then said the old fellow to the boys, —

"Bend on here, and we'll soon have him on shore."

They all took hold with a will; and soon he was with them, but chilled with cold.

"Now," said Grum, "put for home, and get warm."

Grum's stock rose one hundred per cent in the estimation of the boys, and they thought he was not so bad after all. His grass-plot was insured

forever, so far as they were concerned. But really a wonderful change seemed to have taken place in him. He allowed them to help him secure his lines, and let them handle his bow and arrow, which he told them were given him, when a boy, by an old sailor, who got them from Indians in Oregon, where they were used for killing salmon.

"I never killed any thing with 'em," said he; "and 'tis queer that the first game I've had from 'em should be a boy."

The old man actually laughed; and the boys laughed, and, as they went away, they voted Grum a first-rate old fellow. They were sorry that they had disturbed him by turning summersets on his grass, and wished they might take them back; but concluded that couldn't be done unless they went and turned the summersets backward, which wouldn't do, you know, of course.

Ike went home to sage-tea and retirement, with a stone wall of hot rocks all round him, in bed, and a jug of hot water at his feet.

"We should feel very thankful that you escaped, dear," said Mrs. Partington, who had been very anxious, as he gulped down the last swallow of bitter tea, and fervently wished he might have

escaped that; "thankful and glad that a door was opened to you, or found for you, so providential with a string to it; and you must always treat Mr. Grum respectively, and let him see that you regard his kindness with proper contempt. I shall knit him a pair of yarn stockings for his disinteresting malevolence."

Ike said nothing, but, like the Irishman's owl, did a good deal of thinking, and the next day went and thanked Mr. Grum, very handsomely for a little fellow; and Grum and the boys were the best of friends thereafter. They only needed to understand each other; and after a while the Grums and the Partingtons often took tea together.

Spring came on quickly and warmly, bringing the early robins which sang in the trees, and gave the authorities "notices of intention to build," like good observers of a law as old as time; the mud dried up, marbles and pitching cents gave place to hoop and kite, the dandelions came out, spangling the green grass with golden blossoms, and the human boy was himself again. Such kites as were sent up in the breezy days of the last of March!

One dark, windy night there was consternation in the Creek district, which extended to Rivertown. Ike rushed in upon Mrs. Partington, saying, —

"Come out here, do!"

"What's the matter? Is there a fire?" said Mrs. Partington.

"No: come out here, and see the new star."

She went out; and, looking up, there was a large red planet shining above them, the only one in the sky, which gave but a sickly light, and did not seem to remain steadily in its position. It went from side to side, now rising and now falling; and well might the people who saw it be puzzled to know what it was. Mr. Grum and Captain Bob were out viewing the wonderful object, with the rest.

"Do you understand the explanatory system, Mr. Grum?" asked Mrs. Partington of her neighbor.

"No, not much. That is curious, isn't it?"

"It strikes me," said Captain Bob, breaking in, like a boy on thin ice, "it is one of the fixed stars that's got unfixed."

"How wonderful such things are!" said Mrs.

Partington, after a brief pause. "This reminds me of the line, 'The spacious furnishment on high,' and not upon the instalment plan, either, because there's only one, which is very singular."

"I don't know," again remarked Captain Bob, "that it isn't one of the moons of Mars, about which a good deal has been said lately, cutting up shines in the dark here where Mars can't see her."

"Perhaps 'tis a comet," said Mr. Grum: "I thought, just now, I saw something like a tail."

"Good gracious! what's that?" said Mrs. Partington, as the star gave signs of sparks, like a fuse of powder, and then blew up with an explosive sound that reached to where they stood.

"I'm as much in the dark as you are," replied the captain as he turned away.

Mrs. Partington and Mr. Grum exchanged "Good-night;" and the venerable dame went into the house to wait for the coming of Ike, who, she hoped, could furnish some explanation of the mysterious phenomenon, which she thought was about as wonderful as the "Donation" comet which appeared some years before. She meant Donati's comet, of course, but she couldn't correct herself. He came in shortly after, bearing a huge

kite which he stood up behind the door, his face shining with good-nature. She then guessed that he was at the bottom of the stellar mystery; and though disposed to be displeased at the profane attempt to get up a new "consternation," which seemed like flying in the face of Providence, she thought the fact showed a soaring genius, and simply asked him where he expected to go for deceiving Mr. Grum and Captain Roberts as he had. But they both knew more about it than she did.

Ike and the other fellows had worked for a week diligently in preparing that new star. The kite was the easiest part of it, and this was soon made. Then they formed a large lantern of paper, and were going to send this up to go quietly out in darkness; but Ike said No, they must have it go off with a snap. And then they put their heads together to produce something really startling; and an exploding star, they concluded, would be a novelty in science. So they set a small Christmas-tree candle into an ounce or two of powder, fastened it securely with wire, and sent it up; and those at the Corner, who were really deceived by it, set it down as a forerunner of something that was going to happen.

In all this time nothing has been said about the moral influences brought to bear in forming the character of Ike. Great care was taken by Mrs. Partington that nothing should be omitted in this respect. She was liberal in her religious views; and therefore, though she would like to have had him with her when she went to meeting, she told him he might go anywhere where the gospel was dispensed with. She was more liberal in this respect even than a friend of hers, who, in a gush of enthusiastic regard for the liberal idea, said to his son who confessed to have gone one Sunday to a church of a different denomination from his own, "I am glad, my son, to have you go to church, and always go where you please; but, if I ever hear of your going there again, I'll take your hide off!"

So Ike connected himself with the church that had the funniest Sunday-school concerts and the best music. He was always on hand for picnics and sociables, always managed to get his full share of the cakes and oranges, and at religious fairs was a great patron of the grab-boxes. He was good at a pinch in the Sunday school, as the one sitting next him could testify, and almost always excited the profoundest interest of the superintendent.

Talents of the sort which he possessed could not long remain unemployed; and, after a while, he was promoted to the organ-loft, to pump wind into a consumptive instrument whose life was nearly played out. The one who played upon the organ was a young gentleman who fancied that people made a great mistake in going back very far into the past for musical ability, and as for *old Bach* he could do better himself. As soon as he found he had procured a lad to blow who could do justice to the subject, he let himself out to work, as he called his playing.

There were rehearsals and extras and trials and regular occasions; and, as Ike was to receive but fifty cents per week, he thought it was rather playing it on him to expect him to do so much for the money. The extras were increasing; and after service each Sunday he was expected to stay while the choir "philandered" through some fancy pieces for their own amusement. He bore this once; and the next Sunday, after service, there was to be a grand trial of lungs and organ for some occasion that possessed no interest for Ike, so he candidly told the organist, and asked an extra price for the extra work. This was denied him; but there was

no strike, and the extra singing began. It went on splendidly, until there was a great struggle of voices, the soprano chasing the tenor, the tenor dodging round the contralto, and the basso tearing the gamut to pieces in roaring for the police, when at the highest and most exciting point, —

all the voices hanging in mid-air, so to speak, — the organ stopped. The voices, shocked by their own sound, fell flat.

"Why don't you blow?" yelled the organist.

"Dear me, how mortifying!" shrieked the soprano, whose voice had been caught out of tune by the organ's sudden stop.

"Did ever anybody see such a stupid?" said the alto.

"Ought to be kicked, that boy," squealed the tenor.

"Should be sent down below!" growled the bass.

"Blow away!" cried the organist again; but no sound.

He arose to go around and immolate that boy, whom he supposed to be waiting there, when, glancing out of a front window which opened upon the street, he saw the delinquent blower moving along as gradually as if he were on an errand, and had been told to make haste. When at a safe distance he turned, and saw the organist beckoning to him, but he wouldn't go back; and the basso had to pump, and sing at the same time through a little window in front of the organ.

That was Ike's last Sunday as a performer on the organ; and the reason he gave for leaving was that so much blowing affected his lungs. But he never neglected going to church on Sunday. So much for his morality.

The wood-rangers came out again as the spring advanced, and the atmosphere was soft and deli-

cious. The brooks full of the melted snow from the hills, the anemones peeping up among the withered leaves, the tender buds bursting into flower, the greening of the trees, the varied songs of birds, and the perfume that filled the air from the pines, were enjoyed by the rangers with true poetic feeling. They once more sought their old haunts, and cut their names again on the beech-trees.

This was the "sliver" season, when the sap in the pine-trees was running up from the roots, and the bark next the wood was a delicious sweet pulp, which the boys knew by instinct how to extract. This was done by cutting away an oblong section of the bark, and, stripping it up, the coveted delicacy was left exposed to the knife. The edge of the knife, slipped up the surface of the wood without cutting it, released a thin ribbon of the tender prize, and it was devoured with as much gusto as if it had been on the bill of fare at an alderman's feast, — perhaps more.

Fear of being caught in the act of getting it added piquancy to its relish; and Ike had a realizing sense of this once when he was thus caught, and went away from the feast with a back ruled

with blue lines like a writing-book. This, however, though a drawback, he placed among the chances of war, and made up for it abundantly afterwards.

Thus a single year of a boy's life rounded to its close, with its joys, failures, accidents, mischiefs, companionships, and trials, — the ups and downs of the journey towards manhood. Ike Partington is a fair representative of his entire class. His is no phenomenal or exceptional case; and in his adventures and those of his young friends are found the same characteristics that distinguish the human boy all round the world and will become the grandest manhood.

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